OCTOBER
8th
1926
25c

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

Leonard H. Nason
Georges Surdez
Albert Richard Wetjen
Captain Dingle
Robert Welles Ritchie
Frederick Moore
H. Bedford-Jones
Fiswoode Tarleton
Edmund M. Littell
Barry Scobee
Andrew A. Caffrey
Thomas Topham
Alan Williams

3 Complete Novelettes

OCTOBER 8th ISSUE, 1926
VOL. LX No. 1

ADVENTURE

25 Cents

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WHEN night came on, twenty years ago, motorists turned on the gas, struck a match and lighted their lamps. Then they "cranked" the engine and proceeded on their bumpy way with dependable Prest-O-Lite Gas making safe the rough, gloomy road.

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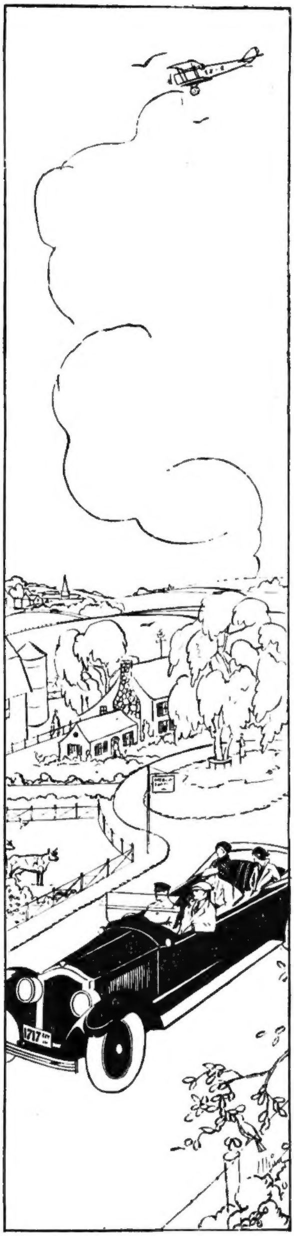

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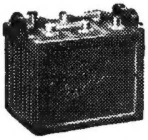

LOST: $35,000

THE OTHER DAY a representative of the Alexander Hamilton Institute walked into a business man's office in answer to a telephone call.

"I have sent for you because I am in serious trouble," said the man. "I am on the verge of bankruptcy.

"Fifteen years ago I had an opportunity to enrol with the Institute," he went on. "But I was just out of college, making a good salary, and I expected to get my experience out of my work. I did pretty well. I accumulated a small fortune."

He hesitated. "It's gone now," he said. "In the last two months I have lost $35,000 in my business, and all because there are certain fundamental principles of business I thought I knew *and didn't.*

"But it's not too late," he concluded. "I can get back that $35,000, and this time I won't lose it. I want to enrol for your reading course before another sun sets."

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It is the business of the Alexander Hamilton Institute to prevent just such tragedies as this. How? By providing a means whereby a man may become familiar with *all* the underlying principles of business.

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ADVENTURE
Oct. 8th, 1926

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Volume 60
Number 1

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Half-sick from constipation, stomach and skin disorders—they regained health by one simple food

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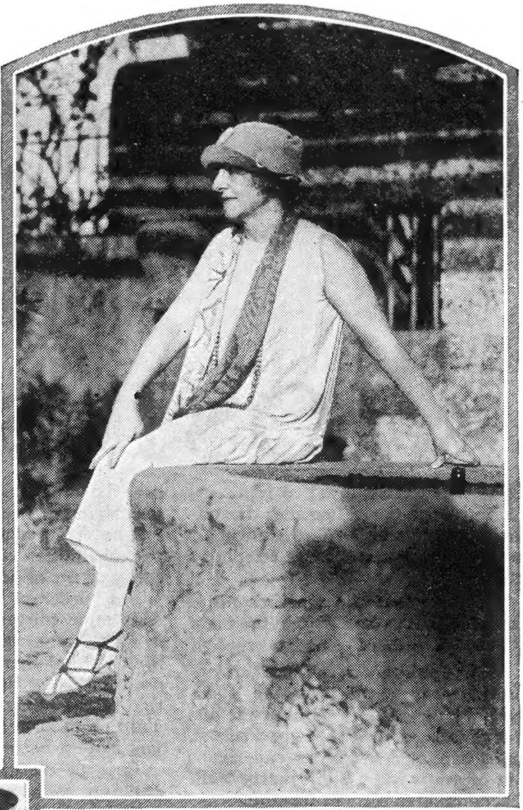

"I WAS TROUBLED WITH INDIGESTION and dizzy spells. Acid gas formed in my stomach. Many people suggested Fleischmann's Yeast. I tried it and it brought great relief. My dizziness disappeared and I felt better in every way. Now I just take Yeast occasionally to keep my stomach in really good condition."
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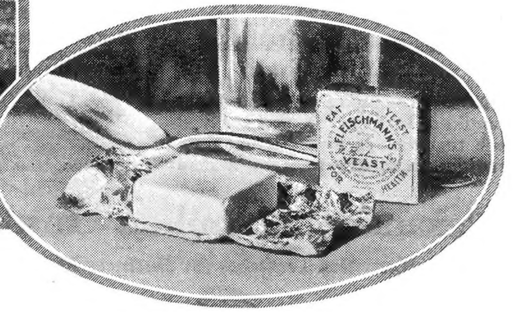

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October 8th
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Vol·LIX·No·1

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Contents for October 8th, 1926, Issue

A Question of Faith *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Georges Surdez** 1
French Foreign Legion—What that uniform meant to the Arab.

An Arizona Aristocrat . . . . **Alan Williams** 35
Cow Country—One rustler who was not hanged.

Observations . . . . **Bill Adams** 40

Cyclops . . . . **Captain Dingle** 41
Land and Sea—"To the ends of the world—"

Eloquence . . . . **Fiswoode Tarleton** 48
Southern Hill Country—Sundown was the limit set.

Estevan, the Big Smoke *An Article* . . . . . . **Robert Welles Ritchie** 61

Chevrons *A Five-Part Story* *Conclusion* . . . . . . **Leonard H. Nason** 65
World War—Off with the gold stripes!

Shingles Out of Bandon . . . . **Albert Richard Wetjen** 92
Pacific Waters—To stop meant the skipper's ruin.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(*Continued on next page*)

(Continued from preceding page)

The Crusoe of Cedar Island . . . . **Patrick Vaux** 98

Alamogordo the Great . . . . **Thomas Topham** 101
Mexico—A goat that bucked up against a revolution.

Steel's Son ***A Complete Novelette*** . . . . **Edmund M. Littell** 112
Foundry—Molten metal and conspiracy.

The Last Evader . . . . **H. Bedford-Jones** 129
New Caledonia—An escape from the penal camp.

The Deceived Gunman . . . . **Barrie Scobee** 137
West—It was the principle of the thing with "*Float.*"

Kokomo Birds . . . . **Andrew A. Caffrey** 144
A. E. F.—A lieutenant from the old home town.

The Bosun of the *Samarkand* ***A Complete Novelette*** . . **Frederick Moore** 151
Dutch East Indies—The cockney was strong for intrigue.

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 174

Camp-Fire Stations 182

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 182

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 182

Ask Adventure 183
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Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Bernard Westmacott**

Cover Design . . . . **John Alan Maxwell**

THE next issue of *Adventure* will be the first in its new dress. For detailed description of how all of the present features of the magazine are to be improved and developed, see Camp-Fire of this issue. Look for the initial instalments of new serials by F. R. Buckley and Gordon Young, a novel by Talbot Mundy, and a novelette by Leonard H. Nason in the next issue.

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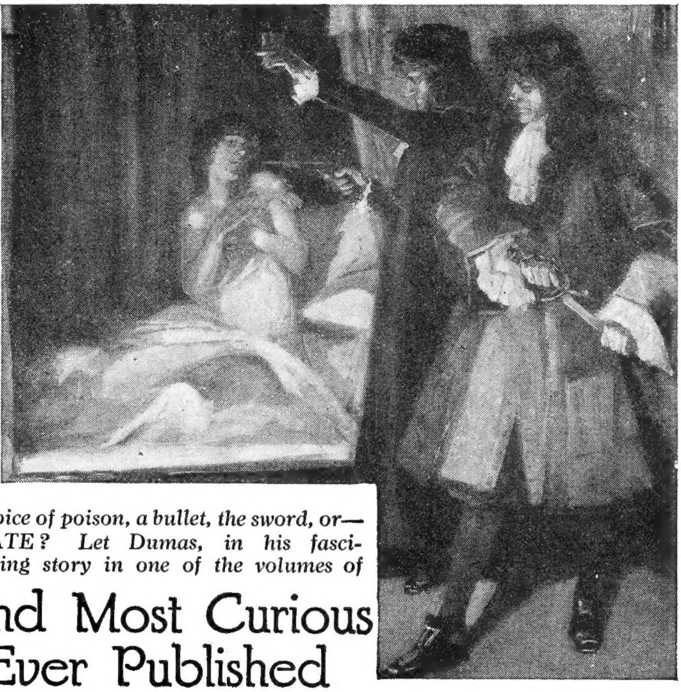

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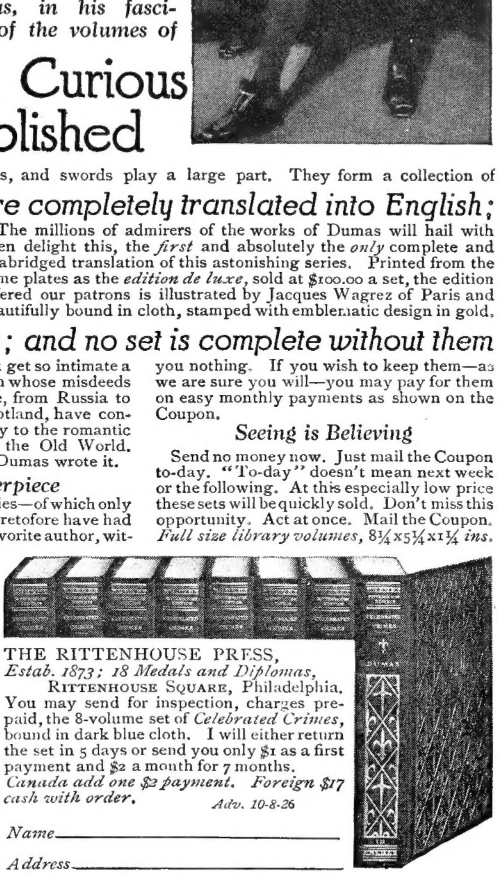

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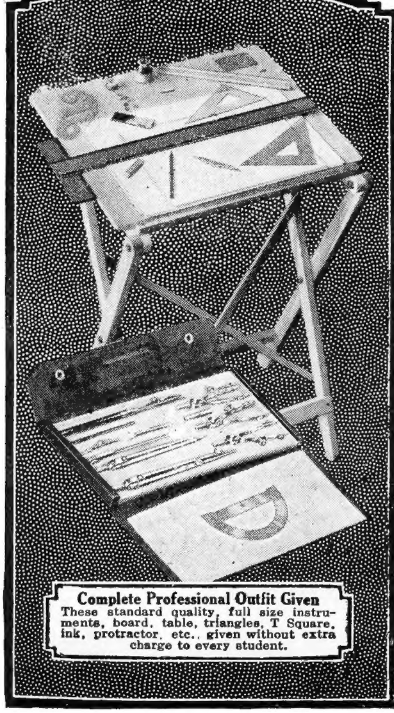

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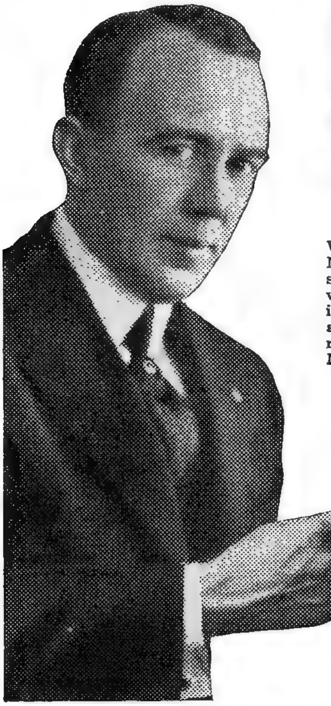

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I'LL come directly to the point. First you'll say, "I could never do it: These men were lucky." But remember the men whose pictures are shown above are only four out of thousands and if you think it's luck that has suddenly raised thousands of men into the big pay class you're fooling yourself!

Easy to Increase Pay

But let's get down to your own case. You want more money. You want the good things in life, a comfortable home of your own where you can entertain, a snappy car, membership in a good club, good clothes, advantages for your loved ones, travel and a place of importance in your community. All this can be yours. And I'll prove it to you, Free.

First of all get this one thing right; such achievement is not luck—it's KNOWING HOW! And KNOWING HOW in a field in which your opportunities and rewards are ten times greater than in other work. In short, I'll prove that I can make you a Master Salesman—and you know the incomes good salesmen make.

Every one of the four men shown above was sure that he could never SELL! They thought Salesmen were "born" and not "made"!

When I said, "Enter the Selling Field where chances in your favor are ten to one," they said it couldn't be done. But I proved to them that this Association could take any man of average intelligence—regardless of his lack of selling experience—and in a short time make a MASTER SALESMAN of him—make him capable of earning anywhere from $5,000 to $10,000 a year. And that's what I'm willing to prove to you, FREE.

Simple as A. B. C.

You may think my promise remarkable. Yet there is nothing remarkable about it. Salesmanship is governed by rules and laws. There are certain ways of saying and doing things, certain ways of approaching a prospect to get his undivided attention, certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudice and outwit competition.

Just as you learned the alphabet, so you can learn salesmanship. And through the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION METHOD—an exclusive feature of the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training—you gain the equivalent of actual experience while studying.

The N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service will enable you to quickly step into the ranks of successful salesmen—will give you a big advantage over those who lack this training. It will enable you to jump from small pay to a real man's income.

Remarkable Book, "Modern Salesmanship" Sent Free

With my compliments I want to send you a most remarkable book, "Modern Salesmanship."

It will show you how you can easily become a Master Salesman—a big money-maker—how the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training will give you years of selling experience in a few weeks; how our FREE Employment Service will help select and secure a good selling position when you are qualified and ready. And it will give you success stories of former routine workers who are now earning amazing salaries as salesmen. Mail the attached coupon at once and you will have made the first long stride toward success.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION
WORLD'S OLDEST AND LARGEST Exclusive SALES TRAINING INSTITUTION

Dept. R-74
N. S. T. A. Building, Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Association, N. S. T. A. Building, Dept. R-74, Chicago, Ill.

Send me free your book, "Modern Salesmanship," and Proof that I can become a MASTER SALESMAN.

Name..

Address ....

City ....State..........

Age.........Occupation................................

No. 6
BURGESS
RADIO "A"
BATTERY
RADIO SERVICE

This is the new Burgess Radio "A" Battery

A SPECIALLY designed "A" battery for radio service. There is nothing like it in its field.

Proportioned to permit ease of handling and convenience of cabinet assembly and storage, you may expect this new Burgess creation to give you the length of service and dependability under all conditions for which all products of Burgess are noted.

If you are using the ordinary type of No. 6 "A" battery, we suggest that you learn for yourself from the Burgess Radio "A" the measure of service you have a right to expect.

Ask Any Radio Engineer

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY
GENERAL SALES OFFICES: CHICAGO
Canadian Factories Sales Offices: Niagara Falls and Winnipeg

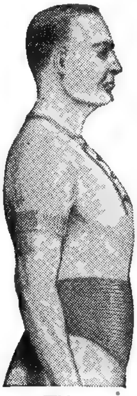
BURGESS
RADIO "A"
BATTERY
BURGESS
"B"
BATTERY

BURGESS RADIO BATTERIES

Get Rid of Your "Spare!"

THAT unsightly, uncomfortable bulge of fatty tissue over the abdomen is an unnecessary burden. Here's the way to get rid of it without fasting, hot baths, or *back-breaking* exercises. The wonderful "Little Corporal" belt will

Without "Little Corporal"



With "Little Corporal"

Reduce Your Waist 4 to 6 inches *Quickly!*

This remarkable belt not only reduces your girth at once, but *keeps your waistline down.* It fits as perfectly as a dress glove. *No laces! No clasps! No buckles! No straps! No stiff supports!* It's built for comfort.

Young Man!

If your waistline is beginning to bulge, *now is the time to stop its growth and to retain your youthful figure. Don't wait until you have a regular "bay window."*

Guarantee Offer!

Send coupon today for free descriptive literature. If you prefer, give us your waist measure (snug) *over underwear*, enclose $6.50 and get the belt, or pay postman on delivery. If not entirely satisfied, your money will be promptly and cheerfully refunded. Price outside U. S. is $7.50. Mail coupon NOW!

THE LITTLE CORPORAL CO.
Dept. 10-E, 1215 W. Van Buren St., Chicago, Ill.

Please send free descriptive literature and Guarantee Offer.

Name...
Street Address...................................
City................................*State*............
If you prefer to order a belt, fill in below:
Waist...........*Height*..........*Weight*............

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Get Rid of These Ugly Spots Safely and Surely and Have a Beautiful Complexion With

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(DOUBLE STRENGTH)

MONEY BACK IF IT FAILS. SOLD BY DRUG AND DEPARTMENT STORES EVERYWHERE

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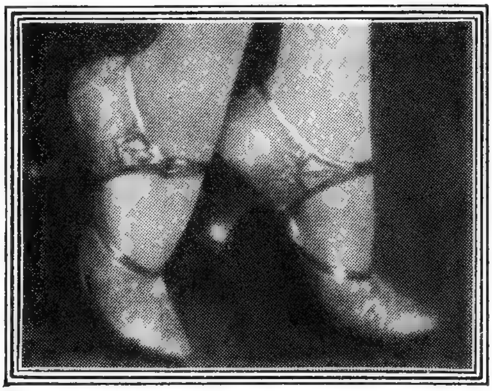
99% Guaranteed by refund of 5¢ each

ROSS-Gould Co. 591 N. 10th St. **St. Louis**

FAMOUS FEET
..how they're kept free from corns..



Florence O'Denishawn's *Famous Dancing Feet*

"Keeping fit, to a dancer, means, first of all, keeping the feet in trim. Tight ballet shoes and strenuous dancing are apt to irritate the tender cuticle of the toes." So writes the well-known dancer, Florence O'Denishawn.

"Blue-jay is an indispensable friend. It keeps corns and calluses away."

And what a delightful way to end a corn! A cool and velvety cushion fits over the corn and stops the pain at once. Usually one plaster conquers the corn in 48 hours. But, if obstinate, a second Blue-jay plaster vanquishes the most stubborn offender . . . . At all drug stores.

Blue-jay

THE SAFE AND GENTLE WAY TO END A CORN

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NATIONAL SPORTSMAN

NATIONAL SPORTSMAN

will bring you each month all the newest wrinkles on firearms, ammunition, fishing tackle, outdoor sport clothing, camp outfits, boats, etc. It will keep you posted up-to-the-minute on game law changes, woodcraft kinks, good grub recipes, care of guns and tackle, breeding and training of hunting dogs, secrets of trapping, etc.

During the many days throughout the year when you can't get out yourself with rod and gun, you can have almost as much fun reading in *National Sportsman* about the experiences and looking at pictures of what other good fellows are doing in all parts of the country.

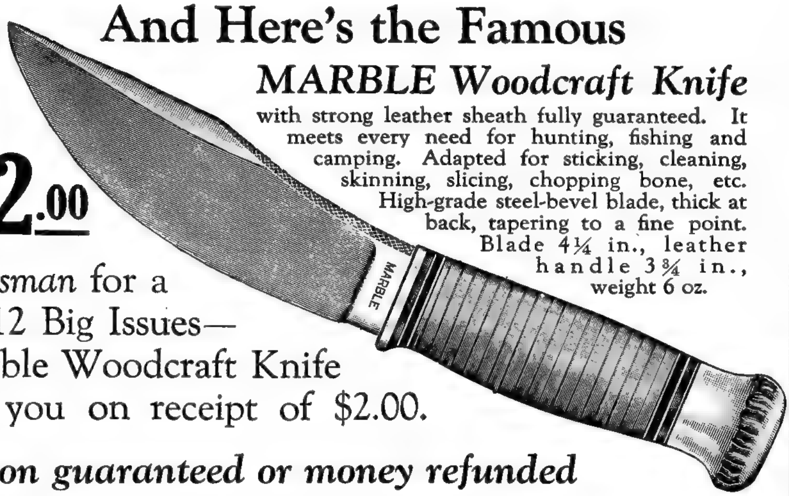
Each issue contains 68 pages with a strikingly beautiful cover in colors, reproduced from an oil painting by America's best outdoor artists.

You Get Both Together for Only $2.00

National Sportsman for a whole year—12 Big Issues—and this Marble Woodcraft Knife will be sent you on receipt of $2.00.

And Here's the Famous *MARBLE Woodcraft Knife*

with strong leather sheath fully guaranteed. It meets every need for hunting, fishing and camping. Adapted for sticking, cleaning, skinning, slicing, chopping bone, etc. High-grade steel-bevel blade, thick at back, tapering to a fine point. Blade 4¼ in., leather handle 3¾ in., weight 6 oz.



Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded

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NATIONAL SPORTSMAN MAGAZINE
266 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.

Gentlemen:

I am returning this Coupon with $2.00 for which I am to receive the Marble Woodcraft Knife and *National Sportsman* Magazine for a whole year.

Name.. Town..........................

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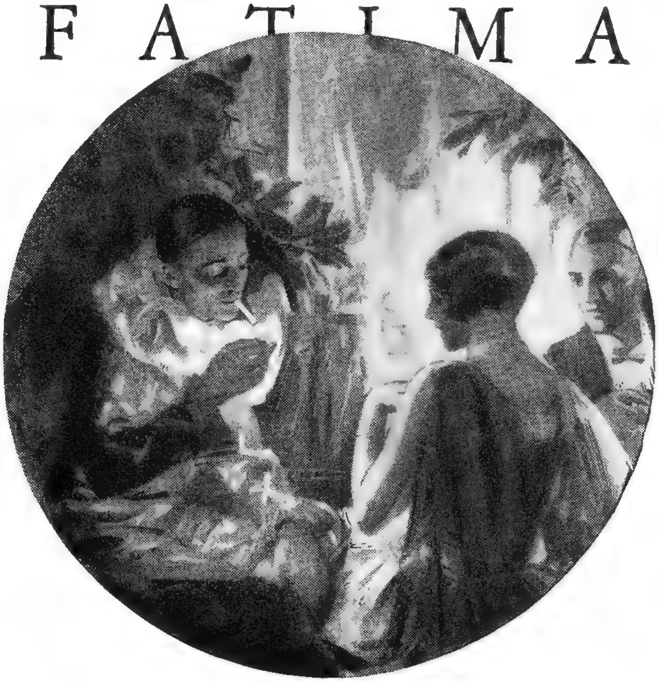
ACT TODAY—This Offer Good for a Limited Time Only!

Ever notice?

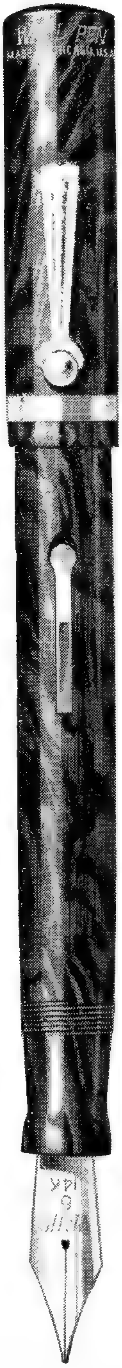
SOONER OR LATER most men reach a point, in everyday matters at least, where price is no longer all-important. They begin to look around for "something better." And it is by no means an accident that just at this point so many men turn to Fatima

FATIMA



"What a whale of a difference just a few cents make"

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.



Wahl Pens are made in new shades of mottled, red and black. This one sells at $7

A great team is the hand and brain, no matter what your goal.

Train them together, in school and in the game of life, for your victory.

One of the greatest aids to perfect play of the mind is a writing tool perfected for the hand:

A Wahl Pen—beautifully balanced, capacious, and enduring:

Your favorite point, in iridium-tipped solid gold.

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Remember, "Your signature is you."

Put it on paper

WAHL PEN

Made by the makers of Eversharp

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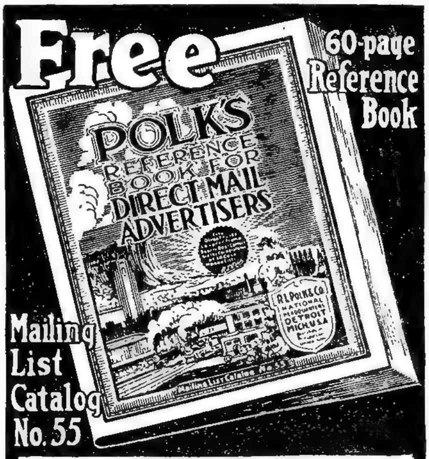
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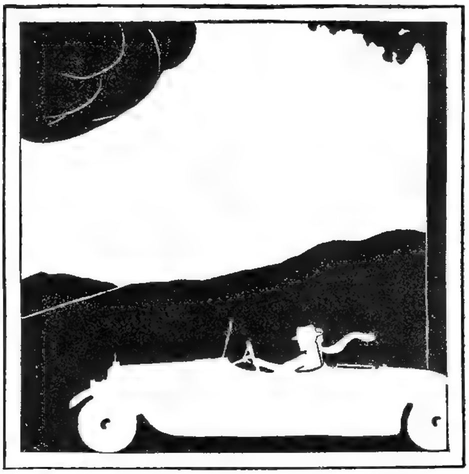

Ho!

For the open road

Gypsying de luxe down a long winding trail, sights of new scenes and the whole wide world at your feet. That's a trip with a kick in it.

But where will your ride be when you return? Will it be a fading memory of happy days, or will you keep it forever with pictures?

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Ansco Speedex Film —in the red box with the yellow band—fits all roll film cameras and is made for inexperienced picture takers to get just the pictures they want.

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Here is the very course you need if you want to get a good paying position as a Show Card Letterer or Sign Letterer, or have a business of your own. This course is complete and practical and especially arranged to meet the needs of the student who studies at home. It was written by E. L. Koller, Principal of the School of Art of the International Correspondence Schools, member of the American Federation of Arts, and The National Society of Craftsmen.

Mr. Koller has had twenty years' teaching experience, and his success in helping other men and women is an indication of what he can do for you.

H. L. Wood, a clerk, made more than $700 "on the side" before he had completed his course and also won $125 in prizes. Harry William Lord writes that he has more than doubled his salary as a result of studying this I. C. S. course in spare time. William Whitman, a former wagon builder, now has a sign painting business of his own and is earning *nearly three times* as much as he did before enrolling with the International Correspondence Schools.

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☐ Structural Engineer
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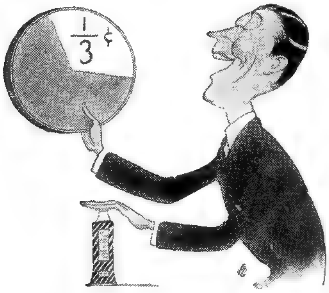
☐ Mathematics

Name...

Street
Address...

City...State.................................



—and

Mennen costs *only* ⅓ cent a shave

All my life I've found that the best usually turns out actually to be the cheapest. I mean that literally —in the dollars and cents meaning of the word.

Take Mennen Shaving Cream. Aside from any other arguments, a Mennen shave costs you only ⅓ of a cent. At the rate of ¾ inch per shave—which is plenty when you use Mennen—you get *five months'* supply of daily, full-size, satisfactory latherings out of the big 50-cent tube. That is, unless "you and yours" use it for shampooing, as thousands do.

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Here is such a remarkable concentration of pure, down-right beard-softening qualities that just a very little bit on your brush gives you the most wonderful, firm lather you ever built.

Use all the water you can—hot or cold, hard or soft—that little sliver of cream will hold plenty. Lathers up into a big mountainous bank which *positively won't dry on your face* and which reduces the stiffest, wiriest whiskers to abject surrender in just about record time.

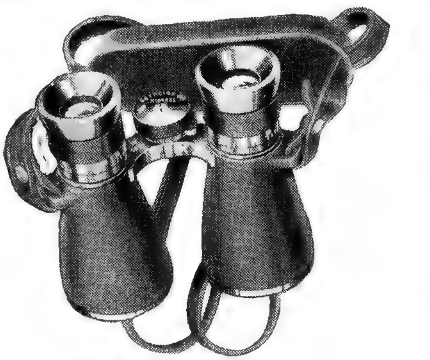
The other economies just follow naturally. For instance, your razor blades last longer—they only have to work half as hard. You save at least five minutes in time over an ordinary shave. You save your skin, keeping it clean and clear. And the invariable cheerful disposition that accompanies the Mennen shave is an economy priceless beyond words.

Mennen Skin Balm—a rare after-shaving treat—cooling, refreshing, astringent, antiseptic. Absorbed in half a minute. Heals up little cuts and scratches. Tones up the skin. And *Talcum for Men*—25 cents for a big tin. Tinted to match your skin—doesn't show. A little flick over the shaved area absorbs moisture—protects against the weather—gives you a well-groomed appearance.

Jim Henry
(Mennen Salesman)

MENNEN
SHAVING CREAM

GERMAN WAR GLASSES



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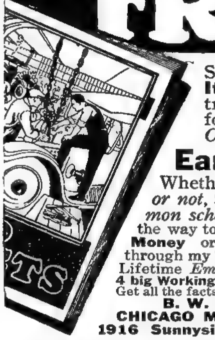

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No other cigarette in the world is like Camels. Camels contain the choicest Turkish and Domestic tobaccos. The Camel blend is the triumph of expert blenders. Even the Camel cigarette paper is the finest—made especially in France. Into this one brand of cigarettes is concentrated the experience and skill of the largest tobacco organization in the world.

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Our highest wish, if you do not yet know Camel quality, is that you try them. We invite you to compare Camels with any other cigarette made at any price.

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HUNDREDS SUPPLIED TO ARMY AND NAVY OFFICERS **These are the GENUINE French and German Army Officers' 8-POWER PRISM Binoculars; famous PREMIERE QUALITE;** brand new, *PERFECT.* Brilliant illumination, exquisite definition; remarkable light-gathering power. Wide field of vision—many times area of field glasses. Central focusing with individual eye-strength and width adjustments. Handsomely finished rich grain leather. Heat and moisture proof. Complete with leather case, neck and shoulder straps. Usually sell for $40.00 to $50.00. Advantageous foreign exchange rates make possible the bargain price.................... **$23.50**

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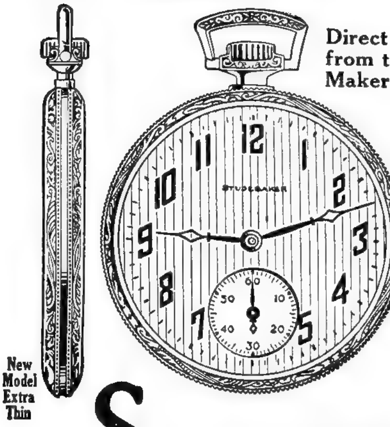

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Only $1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 60 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—***direct from the maker*** at lowest prices ever named on equal quality. Write today for FREE BOOK of Advance Watch Styles.

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For a limited time we are offering a beautiful Watch Chain FREE. Write now while offer lasts.

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Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

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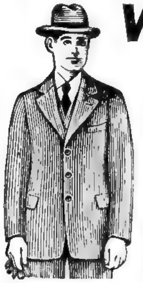

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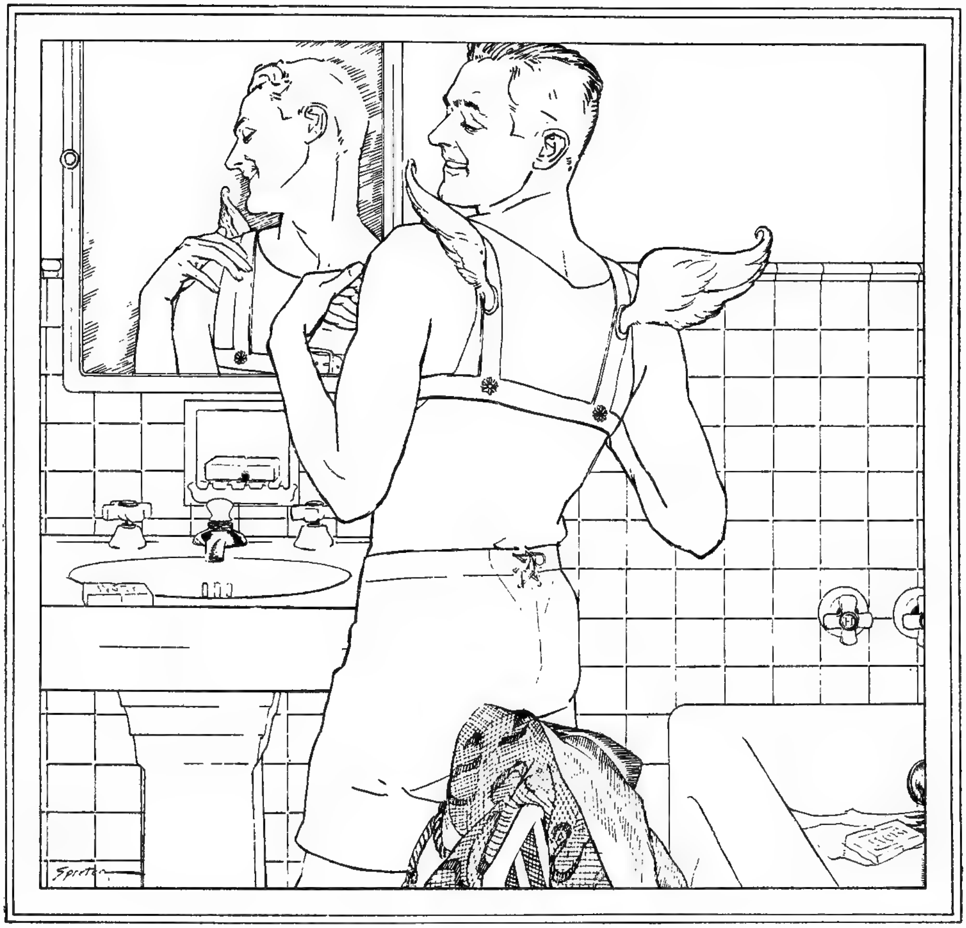

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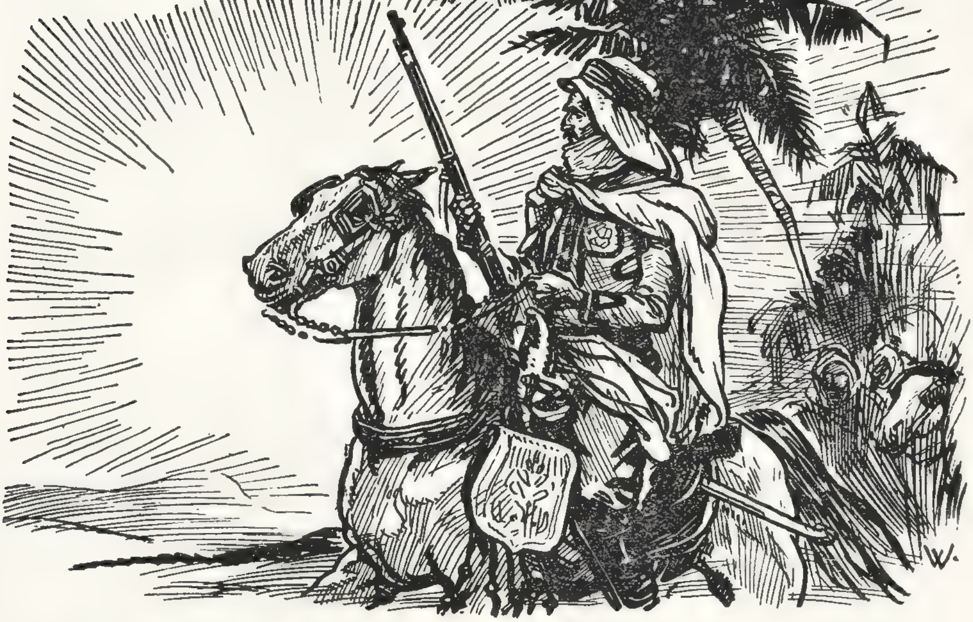

A QUESTION OF FAITH

A Complete Novelette by Georges Surdez

Author of "The Red Shadow," "Dregs of Defeat," etc.

IN THE tawny glow of the sinking sun, the shadows became a deeper hue. The mimosa bushes straggling over the low dunes assumed fantastic shapes. The sky, sheer silken blue overhead, changed into violent purple in the west, receded into the void of the Great Desert.

"Bir Ella Ma, Captain!"

Paul Lartal halted.

Before him, revealed suddenly, was the Military Post. He saw a high, loop-holed wall of sun-baked bricks, a squat blockhouse rising in an angle, the slender shaft of a watch-tower. The three colors of the small flag fluttering high brought a vivid note in the darkening tints.

"Bir Ella Ma, Captain!" repeated the Tukuleur sergeant, who had reined his horse beside the mount of his chief. He extended his right hand, the long, bony wrist jutting from the worn red sleeve barred at the cuff by yellow stripes, "We be there soon, now."

Behind the two, the small caravan waited. A score of pack-camels, a like number of asses, herded by gaunt, bronzed Arabs in dingy whites. Carbines across the saddles, riding erectly, eight Sudanese *Spahis* lifted themselves in their stirrups and shouted loudly, to show their happiness at a safe arrival. Great luck, to travel from Timbuktu to Bir Ella Ma, four days across hostile territory, without being called upon to fire a single shot.

Although he remained silent, contenting

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himself with a nod toward the sergeant, Lartal shared their elation. These animals brought on their backs supplies and ammunition for the small garrison at the Post. And he was not without a subtle emotion, at sight of these walls, until now but a name, walls within which he would live for many months, perhaps a year.

TEN days previously, the military governor in Timbuktu had summoned him. He had entered, puzzled as to the reason for this call, into the big, quiet room, where a rather stout gentleman in whites, with a load of gold and silver stripes on his sleeves, greeted him with what appeared to him more courtesy than was usually bestowed on a mere lieutenant.

"Sit down, Lartal. And before we go any further, allow me to congratulate you. You are entitled to your third stripe. The cable is here—" the governor pounded the desk. "I have heard much good of you. Captain Ruault, who was your commanding officer on your expedition in the Desert north of Araouan, has written me very enthusiastically. I believe, however, that you must be too tired to join the column moving toward Gao on the Niger River."

"Colonel—" Lartal replied, for the Governor was a lieutenant-colonel, "Colonel—I am not tired. In the last two weeks I have had plenty of time to rest. I would prefer to—"

"You are tired," the governor insisted, with such intonation that Lartal understood that he must concede the point. "So that I am going to send you to Bir Ella Ma."

"Yes, Colonel."

"Your official mission will be to pick out among the garrison, composed of old and tried blacks, the most resolute and active men, to be incorporated into a new company of camel-corps. You will also have an eye open for good camels—your experience in the Algerian Desert will fit you for the task—"

"One need not be a sorcerer," Lartal explained with a smile: "Pick them between six and eight years old—sound—"

"I said 'officially,' Captain Lartal. Your real mission will be—rather on the side of diplomacy."

"Yes, Colonel."

"On a previous occasion, your recent trip let us say, you showed qualities of diplomacy in handling a difficult situation. And your discretion since does you credit. There was something between you and Captain Ruault. What was it?"

"You said my discretion did me credit, Colonel."

"Well answered. Now, I will appeal to those same qualities of tact and discretion. The captain commanding at Bir Ella Ma is Gontrand de Vallier. Do you know him?"

"No, Colonel. Is he related to the historian?"

"His son. Fifteen months ago, poor de Vallier received *le coup de bambou*—sunstroke—and was invalided home. He spent almost a year with his family, and came back apparently cured. But—certain letters I have received from him seem to reveal a mental perturbation extraordinary in a man such as he. In a word, he suffers from delusions of one sort or another. To remove him from command abruptly would be too harsh—and perhaps arouse comment. Which is not to be wished for. He comes from a splendid family and there is nothing I dislike so much as to deliberately guide suspicion of any sort to a gentleman."

"I understand, Colonel."

"Nevertheless, he is erratic. Bir Ella Ma is an important position. It will be particularly important later. Within the next few months, the bulk of our forces will operate near Gao, to clean up once and for all in that direction. The Kel Antassar Tuareg, who roam on the territory dependent on Bir Ella Ma, are likely to find out that no help can be sent in case of trouble. A chief from the Tafilalet Oases, Moktar el Khiani—but you know him?"

"A long range acquaintance, Colonel."

"Yes," agreed the other with a laugh. "He is in the vicinity with several hundred men. As you know, his is not a violet-like nature. He may attack the Post. Not probably, but possibly. And an erratic commander—you understand? You will be up there to see that all is right, although you will be nominally under the orders of de Vallier, whose commission antedates yours by a full eighteen months."

"Under these conditions, my hands will be tied."

"You will have written authority to assume command whenever you deem it absolutely necessary, Lartal. I hope you won't find it so. If you manage to avoid that, de Vallier can be quietly transferred to a safer post in course of time. But if the interests of France demand it, use your authority. Whatever you do, you have my approval."

"A rather distasteful rôle, Colonel," Lartal protested impulsively. "Spying on—"

The governor halted him with a gesture.

"Perfectly honorable. In reality, you'll be doing him a service. I repeat that the man is sick, that his brain is not as firm as it might be. If you refuse, which I'll leave you the right to do, I won't try to find anyone else. I'll remove him immediately, and appoint another commander. And removal without obvious and logical reasons is a stain on one's record. What do you say?"

"That I accept."

"I believed you would. So much so that the papers are already filled out. You will go up with the supply caravan, and eight men as a military escort. That will be sufficient at present, for the natives can not know of our movements so far in advance. Aside from your mission, you will find Bir Ella Ma a pleasant place to sojourn. Good water, limitless horizon, a well drilled garrison, a charming lieutenant, and two very efficient sergeants."

"It appears to me that the lieutenant could have—"

"Could have been trusted to assume command when needed? Poor Lartal! One of two things would happen: The lieutenant would be eager to command, and would use his authority too soon, or, what is more likely, the lieutenant would be so friendly with his chief that he would hesitate about hurting his feelings too long."

The governor paused.

"No, in such a case, it is better to send in a man without friendship, and one whose character is above suspicion of meanness."

AND now Lartal was within ten minutes of meeting de Vallier. He would have to recite his petty lies with a straight face, all the while conscious of the paper folded in his pocket. The Colonel had declined to give Lartal further information than that the Bir Ella Ma captain was suffering from lingering effects of sunstroke.

Sunstroke? Lartal had heard such tales before. In lands of sunshine the sun is blamed for all evils. In Algeria, when a legionaire or a private in the Penal Battalions sank a bayonet into the bowels of a friend, or invited the firing squad with more elegance by attacking a superior, the lawyer for the defense invariably evoked the sun—sunstroke. It was not strange, therefore, that the glowing orb of the Sudanese Sahel should receive the blame in this case.

Lartal became aware of his men's puzzled glances. They were eager to go ahead, unpack the animals, and rest.

"Come on," he invited, and led the way.

The sentry at the gate presented arms, and a white sergeant ran out. A stocky fellow, with long arms, and a face that appeared to have been carved from a block of wood.

"Sergeant Frederic Martillac," he said, saluting.

Lartal offered his hand, and introduced himself.

"Captain de Vallier?" he asked.

"On the veranda, across the yard, Captain. Don't bother about these men with you—I know the ropes, and will have everything stowed away safely."

"Thank you, Sergeant," assented Lartal, with a pleased smile. Martillac's manner appealed to him.

He dismounted near the veranda of the officers' quarters, threw the bridle to a waiting private, and ran up the steps. It was quite dark now, but a lamp had been lighted in an inside room, and the glow illuminated a portion of the veranda, where a man was seated. He rose leisurely. Lartal wondered somewhat impatiently why he had not come to meet him.

"Captain de Vallier?"

"Yes."

Once more Lartal repeated his name, and explained his mission: Recruiting, and the inspection of camels suitable for army service. As he spoke he watched de Vallier's face curiously.

In spite of the warning, with the full knowledge that de Vallier was not altogether rational, Lartal found him likable. A very high forehead, straight brows, clear brown eyes—the face was that of an intellectual man, a thinker. He was kind and, at the same time, proud. The long, well-shaped nose and full lips revealed sensitiveness. He wore a beard, long, black. His voice was husky, well modulated, with a vaguely feminine ring.

He listened to Lartal attentively, then nodded.

"You are welcome, Captain Lartal, very

welcome. We become bored at times at Bir Ella Ma. Do you play cards?"

"Yes."

"My lieutenant does not. Tickled the queen of spades once too often in the past, I gather, and swore off. That cuts out one method of passing time."

He led the way through the office, across a dark hall, and into the dining-room—simply furnished, naked white walls aglare in the lamp-light.

"Sit down, Captain Lartal," de Vallier invited, clapping his hands.

Immediately, a negro appeared. He was muscled and shining, teeth large as dominoes in a mouth that split his head in half when he grinned. The powerful neck supported the small, bullet-head, a pillar of muscles rising from Herculean shoulders.

"Captain?"

"Captain Lartal, this is Lassana Dalame. He is stupid and a thief, but he savvys how to make a *vermouth-cassis*."

"No be stupid—no be thief—" Dalame replied, shaken by immense inner mirth, "I savvy make drink, true?"

"Make two," de Vallier ordered.

After the negro boy left, he turned to Lartal.

"Trustworty, the pearl among boys. The one boy I'd trust not to spit in my food after receiving a scolding. They do that, you know."

Dalame, who was in reality not a boy, but a private serving as such, came back with a bottle in each hand, and a water jar balanced on his head. With evident pride he composed the drinks, dosing the yellow fluid with red, and adding the water carefully, with comical movements of the head as he gauged the height to which the liquid must rise to assure the proper mixture.

"That's good," he said at last, placing a glass before each of the white men.

Without further orders he brought a box of cigarets, matches, placed a stool near de Vallier's feet, all with a burlesque exaggeration of gestures. This performance over, he retreated to the wall, a foot away from the door, and became as motionless as bronze.

"I'VE heard of you," de Vallier said. "You came here from the Algerian companies, didn't you? You pulled Ruault's chestnuts out of the fire for him. I hear he was promoted one grade in the Legion of Honor. How do you like the Sudan?"

"Well—so far. But tell me, unless I am much mistaken, Bir Ella Ma means 'The Waterless Well,' in Arabic. Why the name?"

"Legend—many years ago. Sixty years before we came to the Sudan, the Arabs say, the well was found dry by a thirsty caravan. Long years of plenty that had preceded were forgotten, with true human ingratitude, and the name stuck. When this post was built we were too busy to give it a name, so we adopted the old one."

"Good water, I was assured."

"The best in the Southern Sahara, I'll bet—and plenty of it. The walls enclose but two of the water-holes—there are six. The other four were left out, so that admittance to the post would not have to be granted to any and all who wished for water. But they are under our fire, and, in case of trouble, it would be rather difficult for assailants to provision themselves there."

"I believe I saw a cannon on the terrace of the blockhouse?"

"You did," de Vallier assured him. "A small cannon. And to give an example of the remarkable foresight of the administration, when I came here I found that not a single shrapnel shell had been given us. Percussion shells only. You understand just how much chance they have of bursting in the sand. I wrote to Timbuktu that we did not expect to be attacked by a fleet of ironclads, but by men in open order—and, miracle, I obtained shrapnel. Also I had a pump sent up to connect the well with the blockhouse. In case the outer walls were taken, and the garrison cooped up in the stronghold, the exigency of nature would not stop—men would need water. And in case we had close fighting, I have a little invention of mine that would work well. A stick of dynamite inside a bottle, with a few scraps of metal. Something in the style of the old hand grenade."

"Nasty weapons!" Lartal exclaimed.

"If they come close enough for us to use the things it will be far from our thoughts whether the method is legitimate or not."

Lartal, casually, continued his questions. De Vallier showed an understanding of the disadvantages of his post that was on some points better, Lartal admitted, than his own judgment would have been. De Vallier talked willingly, went into details, had a genuine interest in his work. He spoke

Arabic creditably, when it was considered that he had learned what he knew in the Sudan. He also revealed to Lartal that he could make use of several negro dialects. Lartal knew well that de Vallier, to acquire the fine points of his trade, to obtain close touch with native affairs and languages, must have supplied much effort. He realized than an unbiased observer would never have suspected de Vallier of being anything but rational.

They conversed long, on post affairs, until Dalame laid the table-cloth and disposed the plates.

"The lieutenant will be here for dinner," de Vallier explained. "He is passing the sick in review. Iodin for the outside, castor-oil for the inside, the prescription never varies with him. Truly, if our sick privates get well, it is the best proof that salvation lies in faith."

The conversation turned on other topics—France—families.

"Married, Captain Lartal?"

"No, Captain."

"Call me de Vallier. I am married. One son—" de Vallier's hand went to his pocket, and he brought out a photograph in a leather case, handed it to Lartal.

Madame de Vallier was a very pretty woman. Lartal could not quite ascertain the color of her hair, but it seemed blond. Dark eyes, a pure oval face, and an appealing expression of good humor. Her chin, he criticized mentally, was somewhat weak, but one would not expect the chin of an athlete on a pretty woman. The boy resembled his father, in features, a rather delicate, too well-dressed, manifestly pampered child. The same large brow and sensitive nose, the same glance, at once wondering and proud.

"That—be pretty Madame! That—be pretty little one," commented Dalame, who was glancing over Lartal's shoulder, without stopping his present task, the arduous wiping of a large dish.

Lartal was aware that Dalame had said all that could politely be said, and would have felt ridiculous to repeat the exact words in better French. He glanced involuntarily up into the negro's face. De Vallier caught the glance.

"Dalame, thou art annoying the captain. Wait at least until he is accustomed to thy ugly head before playing tricks and speaking so much."

"Rather original, your boy," Lartal said in amusement, after Dalame had gone out.

"Fontarge, the lieutenant, plays with him constantly, and the poor fellow doesn't know when to stop."

"Fontarge—" Lartal repeated. "Not Hector Fontarge?"

"Yes."

"About my age? Tall, red haired?"

"Yes. Oh, I see—promoted from the same school, eh?"

"Yes. A particular friend—"

"I recall now that when your name was mentioned in connection with a brush against Moktar el Khiani, he said he knew you."

De Vallier went to the door:

"Dalame! Dalame! Come here, animal that thou art! Don't sulk. Go find Lieutenant, quick."

Lartal stood up, and paced back and forth impatiently.

Fontarge, Fontarge, a fine fellow, fond of practical jokes, inclined to treat serious matters lightly and light matters seriously. Fontarge, who did not play cards—why, of course—the last he had heard of him he was in some mess caused by too much gambling, or more precisely, too little luck at gambling. What marvelous good fortune to find him here, at Bir Ella Ma.

He saw de Vallier smiling, sharing his sudden joy. What a sympathetic man, this so-called mad captain. Lartal began to wonder if it was not the military governor who needed mental rest.

HECTOR FONTARGE entered the dining-room.

Lartal perceived that he had schooled his face to a serious expression, as was correct for a man about to meet a superior. Physically, Fontarge had changed much. His complexion was darker, the round lines of shoulders and chest were now angles. The sloping forehead, that Lartal recalled as smooth, was wrinkled, with a dark line where the sweat-band of the helmet pressed. But the blue eyes had not changed, they held the same combination of defiance and mirth that had so irritated his professors.

He took two steps into the room, and waited for Captain de Vallier to make the introduction. De Vallier, seated, did not move, did not speak. The bewildered Fontarge glanced apologetically toward

Lartal, not knowing whether to speak or not. The completely amazed expression, that twisted his face into a grin, amused Lartal.

"Lartal?" he queried. Without waiting for an answer, he strode across the room, and grasped Lartal's hand. "I knew you were in the Sudan—but to have you here! What luck! Are you permanent, or do you have to go back to Timbuktu?"

"Permanent—at least three months—camel doctor," Lartal replied.

Retaining a hold on his hand, Fontarge had turned to de Vallier.

"Captain, I wouldn't give this moment for double pay!"

De Vallier smiled.

"Don't devour him, Fontarge. And Lartal must be hungry."

He clapped his hands—

"Dinner!"

Dalame, deft in gesture as he was clumsy in speech, served at the table. Broth, sardines; then an enormous roast of lamb, pleasing to the eye and teasing to the nose, appeared.

Fontarge looked at the thick slices on his plate, then up at Dalame.

"Moo?" he questioned.

"Ba—ba—little one," Dalame assured him.

"Nonsense," Fontarge protested, after tasting the meat. "This is ma—ma—old one!"

Dalame was convulsed with laughter, immense, silent laughter. His teeth fell three inches apart, his eyes vanished behind dilated nostrils. The three white men laughed by contagion. Dalame, still shaking, went off to fetch another bottle of Burgundy wine.

"Fontarge, that joke of yours is inane," said de Vallier. "And lacks decorum. Lartal will believe us mad."

"Can't stop it now. It has become a tradition. If I didn't do the same thing every time meat is served, Dalame would sulk, and the dishes would come on the table cold. Remember the manual of the officer: A good chief maintains good humor by voice and gesture, for a satisfied trooper is the best trooper. As for Lartal, he was in school with me, and can not have forgotten that he placed glue in the professor's boots and molasses in the ink-wells."

Lartal grinned and said:

"There should be an addition to army regulations: Don't ask a man to assume authority over a school friend. No man is a hero to his valet, no man is a chief to his friend. I'll have to grin and bear it for fear of further revelations. Blackmail, sheer blackmail."

Fontarge leered craftily.

"One word, and I'll tell. Your first love, Captain Lartal, was fat, red-faced and Breton. Profession: assistant to a cook. Not a full fledged cook, Captain de Vallier, but an assistant cook. It has been claimed that he helped her peel potatoes."

"Love knows no ridicule," de Vallier commented.

Fontarge once launched, there was no possibility of serious conversation. When Dalame next entered the room, Fontarge decided to call the cook for compliments. He pressed the black's prominent navel with his thumb, and a surprizingly accurate imitation of a bell resounded from the cavernous mouth. The big negro lent himself with perfect docility to Fontarge's every whim, with the patience of a trained bear.

Lartal knew, however, that under this exuberance, Fontarge concealed a keen, cool mind, that solved problems swiftly. He knew that the blue eyes, so innocently merry, saw and noted everything that happened. That a flaming courage would show when required. From him, he hoped to obtain details concerning de Vallier which would allow the shaping of a course; to sail between the perilous rocks of haste and too great a deliberation. If there existed a flaw in de Vallier's character, Fontarge had penetrated it. And he would not refuse to talk to an old friend. The finding of Fontarge at Bir Ella Ma, had simplified Lartal's delicate mission.

When the coffee cups and brandy were brought by Dalame, Fontarge, who had eaten heartily, became somewhat tamer in speech, and Lartal, less pressed for answers, had time to watch de Vallier. Although the officer laughed at the lieutenant's sallies, he laughed with his lips, not wholeheartedly. He was, Lartal decided, inclined to brooding.

Often, while apparently listening, his mind wandered far off. It was certainly not concentrated on the flood of reminiscences and anecdotes exchanged by Lartal and Fontarge. Between courses he had smoked, after a brief apology, an unexpected courtesy between soldiers. Yes, de Vallier was nervous, very nervous. And, whenever a call was heard in the yard, he straightened up, and his hands tightened on the table cloth. At times, a sort of film curtained his pupils. Lartal placed him as a man with private misfortune. Who knew what personal problems de Vallier was called upon to face? He was reputed to be wealthy, but between supposition and fact a wide gulf can sometimes yawn. He was married, had a son. Two added elements of perturbation. A man, jealous by nature might suffer. And tidings of even a slight illness of the boy might worry him into fretful movements.

When de Vallier talked, he talked lucidly, without the unconnected leaps from one topic to another, that an irrational man would show. He had, on the contrary, a rather dogged patience in obtaining precisely the answer he desired. His arguments were in order, and fell into place like trained soldiers on parade.

LARTAL questioned Fontarge with regard to his drawing—the lieutenant handled a pen or pencil with skill—and was shown a collection of creditable sketches: the black soldiers in action, landscapes, hastily tinted, compositions showing the *moussos* (women) of the *Spahis* and *Tirailleurs* at their various occupations.

"Full of life," de Vallier declared. "Little application to technique, however. Lartal, don't you think that if he gave more attention to the work he might do something genuinely good?"

Fontarge pulled a wry face.

"You're discouraging—" he exclaimed. "Anyway, your opinion does not matter. You run to blades and metal workmanship." He turned to Lartal, "Wait until he shows you his collection. He's gone crazy over Arab art."

"Yes," de Vallier agreed. Then he went on thoughtfully, "The Koran forbids the representation of the human figure. One path closed the true artist finds another. Take the jewels of stone we call mosques and palaces, take that simitar I have, Fontarge, and tell me you can compare them with the daubs we see exposed in France, cows knee deep in water, lady in a ball-gown—"

"Anything and everything that's Arab!" Fontarge said. "Revile his ancestors, but leave Mahomet alone; Lartal, Captain de Vallier even admired El Khiani!"

"Who is not, strictly speaking, an Arab," Lartal pointed out. "But he has undeniable qualities. The undying spirit of independence is perhaps the best trait in human nature, and Moktar is certainly unbending on that score. Because he has drubbed us a few times does not make him a monster."

"Two of you, now? I'm outnumbered," Fontarge surrendered. "If you admire art and cruelty combined, why not place the Chinese above the Arab in your esteem?"

"The Chinese are cruel, yes," de Vallier spoke slowly. "But theirs is the cruelty of an old man, patient, refined, a science, a vice. That of the Arab is virile, young, earnest, as unconsciously ruthless as the cruelty of a boy tearing an insect to bits. With it, they combine a scorn for suffering, are brave in combat. There's the difference."

"Don't look to me for help," Lartal said. "I fully agree with de Vallier."

Dalame placed a pack of cards on the table.

"A game of *piquet*, Lartal?"

"Willingly—"

Fontarge watched the play with eager eyes, his hands twitching. But he did not give in to temptation. Lartal, who was a good player himself, found a better one in de Vallier. Dalame, frankly partisan, received his chief's victories with smiles, and his losses with grunts, from his post at the door. Lartal, having eaten a good dinner, drunk good wine and liquors, and now playing cards with an expert, decided that Bir Ella Ma was the ideal station for a man.

At ten o'clock, de Vallier suddenly dropped the cards, which Dalame collected and put away.

"Your room is next to that of Fontarge, Captain," he said. "He'll show you around."

He left the room, and Lartal heard his firm steps on the stairs. Fontarge was looking at him, with a half smile.

"Nice fellow," Lartal volunteered.

"One in a thousand," Fontrage agreed.

"You seem to have an easy time here."

"You bet."

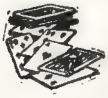
"I'd like to have a look around," Lartal went on.

"Wait until morning. One gets the wrong impression at night. If you're not sleepy, come up on the terrace and have a smoke."

On the terrace, Fontarge spread his arms wide, breathed deeply. His face was bathed in pale light, every feature distinct, yet the expression was strangely contorted by the lengthened shadows of brows and nose. He indicated with a sweeping gesture the translucent beauty of the dunes.

"Look at that, old man. And we used to call that pale cheese up north a moon. Seems so near you could bite into it. And you'd think you could pluck those stars out, like diamonds off of a black velvet cloth. At times, I long for the old life—the terrace of a café, white topped tables, the saucers piling high. Then I come up here and bless the unlucky card that wiped out my little pile, forced me to take my job seriously. I come up here, and all the desires I ever had for anything vanish."

He tore at the buttons of his tunic, opened his undershirt until his chest was bare. Sprawled in the chair, his long booted legs flung wide apart, he smoked, the tip of his cigaret glowing like slender red jewel.



"YOU—you have always longed for this business," Fontarge went on. "A picture of a camel in an atlas would send you drooling with joy and anticipation. Not I. A vigorous flower in a delicate garden, that was my intended rôle. And here I caper, play the fool, amuse Dalame, shock de Vallier—"

"I heard you were cleaned out at cards, Fontarge, and I felt sorry for you. You had desires—well—desires that match little with a moderate income."

"Desires? I desired everything. Gradually, under the influence of my surroundings, my desires are becoming less. A good meal, a glass of wine, and I feel happy, with the happiness of a swine in his sty. By and by, I'll age and desire a hut and a garden to fuss around in. Unless my desires are brought down to one: To find a shady spot for my head, a comfortable place wherein to croak, after the Tuareg get through running spears into my chest."

Fontarge was silent for a few moments.

"And you, what is your desire?"

"To live as actively as I can, while I have life."

"You'll have all the activity you wish before long. There has been little material evidence so far, but I have a very distinct feeling that a noose is tightening about this place. I literally smell the enemy all around us."

"All we have to do is sit tight until the troops get finished near Gao. We are as secure in this post as we would be in Paris. Unless Moktar succeeds in coaxing us out, some fine day. The Tuareg and Moors are brave enough, there does not exist a braver breed. But to attack walls defended by a cannon and fifty-odd Lebels in expert hands does not suit their tactics. They like open fighting—a quick rush at dawn, or a running fight."

"They'll be content to blockade us within these walls. That is de Vallier's opinion, also."

"I noticed that he was worried, and believed that responsibility was weighing on his spirit."

"Responsibility weigh on him?" Fontarge asked ironically. "Not very likely, if you know the man. He likes responsibility. Thrives on it. And, I must say, I believe him capable of handling a troop of cavalry, the defense of a Sudanese post or a European campaign as well, and better than all the leather-pants of the general staff."

"Good leader, is he?"

"He has a way of handling cavalry that takes my breath away, although you know I'm not easily impressed. Must be born in him."

"His father was a cavalryman—"

"His father commanded a company of *Cuirassiers* in the Prussian War. His leg was amputated in a field ambulance. Wrote a few books of memoirs, a monumental wail over things dead and gone."

"Not altogether without logic, his books," Lartal said, warmly. "He has some mighty good ideas. 'Before Sedan' is a lucid explanation of petty ambition wrecking a great nation. A broken-hearted epic, which would be better known, were it not that it does not cater to public beliefs and the idols of the public."

Lartal lighted a cigaret, tossed the match aside in a parabola of fire.

"I know that de Vallier is a good soldier. But what about the man side of his nature? You say he does not fear responsibility? Why is he nervous, then?"

"I suspect you of curiosity, Lartal!"

"With a few months to spend with him—that's easily understood."

"No more fairy stories," Fontarge invited cheerfully. "You did not come here to buy camels: The Government has other uses for officers of your type. I'll strike a bargain with you: You tell me your story, I'll tell you mine. How is that?"

"Tell me yours, and I'll see whether I have any to tell."

"Soon told. De Vallier has written something that did not sound quite sensible to the governor. You came here to investigate, with the clumsy diplomacy that a fine chap like you is likely to bring to such a job."

"Am I as obvious as all that?" Lartal asked, chagrined.

"To me, yes. To others, perhaps not. All the while you were kidding with de Vallier and me, you looked as you used to look when it was discovered that your bench-mate's composition was exactly like your own. You didn't want to get another into trouble, yet you hesitated to tell the truth, because your self-sacrificing nature was not developed to that extent."

"Do you know, Fontarge, that if you would give up your pose as a fool, you'd get far in the military career?" Lartal said with sincere admiration.

"No," Fontarge retorted. "I would not. I have one fault—intelligence."

"Modest man!"

"Well—there's your story told. To show you I'm a good fellow, I'll tell you mine."

"If it pains you to talk of de Vallier—"

"It does not—for there's nothing against him in what I'm going to say. The man is ridden by something which is fear without being fear. That's not clear. I'll put it another way: He seems to know that something will happen to him, something very grave, but is not sure when it will happen. And, as time passes, he becomes more and more nervous, like a man waiting for a trolley car with a watch in his hand. He has given me that impression time after time."

"What is it that he is waiting for?"

"I don't know. But I'll warrant that whatever it is, it is connected with this place, and, in some mysterious way—here I am swimming in mystery—it is connected with Moktar El Khiani."

"Bah!" Lartal exclaimed startled. "What does Moktar have to do with this?"

"I tease de Vallier about his sympathy with the old fellow. He defends him as if he were a personal friend. Told me, recently, that Moktar was misunderstood."

"Yet the Moor tries his best to make his aim plain," Lartal commented.

"That's what I thought. I said he was an elderly ruffian, and de Vallier left the table without another word."

"Interesting, but rather flimsy as information," Lartal declared. "Pass on, what are the other symptoms?"

"You will notice, after a while. He has a nervous contraction of facial muscles when the sentry challenges a visitor. Whenever he is called upon to question a man picked up by a patrol, particularly if the fellow happens to be a Moor, he looks like a man going forth to meet his end, strive as he does to conceal it from me. Yet, after the man's identity is established, he seems disappointed and annoyed."

"What do you think is his reason?"

"I have told you, Lartal. You draw your own conclusion."

"You're building up a nasty case, Fontarge. All points to a deeply laid conspiracy against France. De Vallier has arranged to betray Timbuktu into the hands of Moktar, for a ten per cent. cut in the taxes."

"You level any more sarcasm in my direction," Fontarge warned, "and I keep my mouth shut. No more stories, and you find your way to your room alone."

"Don't say that. I might stumble into de Vallier's quarters, and he evidenced a desire for privacy."

"BY ——!" Fontarge exclaimed. "I was forgetting the best of it: The man cloisters himself in his room, and writes. That's why he left so early tonight—excuse: sleep."

"That's not necessarily suspicious. De Vallier may believe himself the novelist of the future. He may be, for all we know."

"I have thought of that. But that is only a recent thing with him. Again, since Moktar came out of the desert. Part of the writing, Lartal, is for his wife. He sends letters that must weigh all of a pound by each mail. Of course, graphomania is no new thing out here. Every sub-lieutenant buds out a Flaubert and blooms into a Zola during his stay here. Partly to kill time, partly because he really thinks his stuff amounts to something. 'How Tuareg Fight.' Did you ever read that charming booklet, signed X—, sub-lieutenant, Sudanese *Spahis?* Published in France for the use of 'officers called to service in the Sudan.' Author was twenty-two years old, stayed here four months, two of them in the hospital, with a combination of itch, sunstroke and homesickness. You, the serious Lartal, have probably concealed, somewhere up your sleeve, a manual on the care of camels and the tactics of the camel-corps. Right?"

Lartal flushed guiltily.

"Go on," he invited.

"Having established that writing as such is not a cause for suspicion, we will narrow down. A gentleman who writes usually talks of his subject. He gleans information here and there. De Vallier doesn't—unless he's writing about Arabs—"

"Do you know what I think?" Lartal asked smoothly.

"No."

"That instead of finding one fool, I have found another." Lartal rose, stretched. "I am in for it, I guess. And the worst of it is that, by the time I can obtain my transfer to the Gao column, the Tuareg will be around here so thick that I will not be able to leave."

"You'll have time to write, Lartal."

"——! Where's my room?"

Still laughing, Fontarge led the way down-stairs, entered a small room. He fumbled around, scratched a match, and lighted an oil lamp. A yellow glow filled the little room, throwing the men's shadows, grotesquely enlarged, on the whitewashed wall.

"Dalame, who serves me as well as de Vallier, will bring you water in the morning. Those blankets are mine, and I sincerely believe you'll sleep alone tonight, though I can't guarantee. My room is ten feet down the passageway. If you feel afraid in the night, call me."

Fontarge opened a drawer.

"All in place. Soap, towel on the washstand, cigarets and matches handy."

Lartal thumped the bed with his fist pensively, and said nothing.

"You're not sore, are you?" Fontarge asked.

"No. But I should be. Of all the ridiculous errands."

"You may be useful in time," the lieutenant suggested. "In the meanwhile, as I have to turn out at five to trot out and take a look around, good night."

Lartal undressed, slipped into the cot and blew out the lamp.

"Are they both crazy?" he wondered. "Or—am I?"

LARTAL was awakened by the crackling of rifles.

He went to the window, and propped the Venetian blind securely with the stick provided for the purpose. He knew that the firing did not mean an attack upon the fort, for in that case there would have been confusion within the walls.

A few hundred yards away from the post, he saw a line of blue-clad *Tirailleurs*, some kneeling, others prone. He recognized de Vallier, who was speaking with another European, probably the sergeant whom Lartal had not as yet met.

Dalame, as if he had been waiting for Lartal's first move, entered quietly, handed Lartal a cigaret, struck a match, and with gravity held it until the smoke came in clear puffs. This first rite accomplished, he filled the tin basin on the crude washstand, and with professional dexterity, stropped the razors he discovered in the new captain's kit. Upon a gestured invitation from Lartal, he also lit a cigaret, and went on stropping, his great black forearm a blur, so much energy did he bring to his task. All the while, he grinned.

He had not spoken a word. He was really well trained, and it was only when encouraged that he permitted himself liberty of language. But his features were expressive. For example, Lartal saw very plainly that he did not approve of shaven chins, and much preferred his master's beard. His master? After all, perhaps he was Fontarge's man, for no one had told Lartal just who had brought him to the post.

"Dalame, whose boy art thou? Lieutenant? Captain?"

"Captain boy."

Lartal plied the blade on his cheeks, then rounded deftly below the chin.

"Long time?"

"Long time."

"Where hast thou been with Captain, Dalame?"

"Nioro, Bandiagara, this place."

Dalame changed the water. While Lartal was watching he stood by the window, looking out.

"Captain?"

Lartal turned, and Dalame beckoned, then pointed out of the window in the direction of the targets.

"My captain will shoot now—watch!"

Intense pride shone in the big black's eyes. Dalame quivered with excitement, with anticipated triumph. De Vallier had in fact taken a rifle from the hands of the nearest private. Lartal saw him exchange a few words with the white sergeant, then bring up the gun. He fired, and the tiny flags fluttered desperately. Dalame breathed loudly.

"Captain good man, eh, Dalame?"

"Good man," Dalame asserted with conviction. "All black men say so." Again Dalame pointed: "Lieutenant—"

Lartal squinted, and perceived, far off, the silhouette of Fontarge, conspicuous in white among the red and blue *Spahis* who followed him. But Lartal could not look for long. Fontarge seemed to ride straight out of the sunlight, and although it was still early in the day, the glare stabbed deep into the captain's pupils.

"He come fast," decided Dalame. Then, after a swift round of the room, which became orderly and spotless as if by magic, he disappeared, taking with him his pitchers and towels.

"Queer nut!" grumbled Lartal. "As queer as every one else here."

He finished dressing and again glanced out. Fontarge had arrived at his chief's side, was leaning out of the saddle and talking with animation. Then the two came toward the Post followed by the *Tirailleurs.* And Lartal descended to the dining-room.

De Vallier and Fontarge came in a few seconds later. The lieutenant's face was smeared with dust, and he seemed elated for some reason. After a brief word of greeting, de Vallier informed Lartal:

"You got in just before the shower, it appears. Fontarge says he saw a camp on our west, and riding across, ran into a strong party of Kel Antassars, some sixty horsemen and perhaps two hundred on foot. I presume it will be best, until new developments, to keep every one within the walls."

"I'll ride out this afternoon," Fontarge offered, "and feel them out. They may be simply passing by—although their camp seems established for a long stay. Long files of camels were going off, under guard, probably to pasture. That means they want to avoid using up the pasture land within their immediate vicinity; in other words, they have an eye for the future."

"You will stay in," de Vallier informed him firmly. "We are not strong enough to do anything worth the risk outside. And although we might spare you, we could not spare eight *Spahis.*"

"Charmingly put, Captain," acknowledged Fontarge.

"After breakfast, I'll show you around, Lartal. I'd like your opinion. This will be my first siege. I understand that you had experience of a like nature in the North."

"The result of which can be put in a few words. A troop commanded by European officers, behind walls, intelligently handled, can hold out as long as supplies and ammunition last. Since the mowing down of the Prussian Guard at St. Privat, it is generally admitted that an advance in the open against rifle fire is too costly. Lacking artillery to open a breach, I fail to see any chance of a successful storming of Bir Ella Ma."

"You talk like a dentist," Fontarge remarked.

Although he pretended not to understand, he followed the two captains on the inspection tour and listened attentively to the discussion of redans and angles. With praiseworthy foresight de Vallier had stocked the blockhouse, the last refuge, with food and cartridges. Tanks had been filled with water, in provision for a possible fire, for the stables and huts of the troopers were roofed with straw or palm leaves.

"I have no suggestion to make," Lartal declared. "Have you thought of a night attack?"

"When the enemy is actually in a position to strike a blow, I'll manage some sort of a wire arrangement and light up the threatened area by igniting rags soaked in kerosene, and sheaves of straw. I imagine that at such moments, two minutes of vision is sufficient—the attackers would be within such close range that a miss would be impossible."

ON THE terrace of the blockhouse, the four blacks of the gun crew had taken the jacket off the small cannon, and were vigorously shining the tapering barrel. Parneaux, the fifth white man at Bir Ella Ma, a broad-shouldered, ox-faced fellow, shook hands with Lartal, and explained his system for feeding the gun while in action, without exposing the carriers to bullets. He must have been more intelligent than his face revealed, for here again Lartal had no suggestion to make.

"You're a good pointer?" Lartal asked.

Parneaux grinned slowly.

"Five years in the navy, Captain."

He spat on the sand below.

"Show me anything within range of this gun, and I'll hit it. Would be a pity if I couldn't, after having been trusted to fire shells worth fifteen thousand francs a piece!"

He glanced at his men and shrugged.

"I'd be happier though, if I could keep those niggers from shutting their eyes and plugging their ears before firing."

The former sailor who, after some misty tragedy, had left the crew of the finest battleship of the Republic, to end up in the Naval Infantry, had not exaggerated his skill.

In the late afternoon a group of natives appeared on a dune a kilometer and a half away, evidently placed there on observation. Through a field-glass mounted on a tripod, Lartal and the other officers saw the blue-and-white-clad Moors establish themselves comfortably, saw them wave derisive hands when the rifle bullets kicked up the sand. Then, Parneaux, with his thick fingers unbelievably deft of touch, spun his little wheels, stepped back, and fired the cannon.

Whether luck or extraordinary precision of aim, the little shell split the air above the group. There followed a comical scurry of the warriors for shelter. A long howl of admiration rose from the black troopers at their posts along the walls. Parneaux, modest, yet flushed with pleasure, beamed upon his men.

Before darkness was complete a scatter of shots came from every angle of the horizon. A few bullets thudded against the bricks. The rest passed high. The wives and children of the negroes, crazed by the excitement and smell of powder, brandished knives and millet-mashers defiantly, yelling shrilly.

"THIS siege is degenerating into a comedy," Fontarge remarked three weeks later. "I very much fear that it will not go down in the annals of colonial warfare as a fiercely fought engagement."

The three officers were gathered in the dining-room, with the inevitable Dalame, who, satisfied by the usual joke, had resumed his statuesque pose near the door, after producing the cards. The blinds were up, and the lamp lighted. The windows of the lower floor of the white men's quarters were below the level of the surrounding walls, and safe from long-range sniping.

The *piquet* game between de Vallier and Lartal was proceeding monotonously.

"The principal danger," Fontarge went on, "is that, confined within the limits of the post, without exercise we will all become obese. The temptation is to loaf, and eat. And I, who had pictured another siege of Paris, the meals of stuffed mice and deviled rats—"

"Twenty-nine, thirty, the last trick thirty-one," Lartal counted, "and cards, forty-one!"

De Vallier nodded absently, then tensed, listening. Fontarge glanced swiftly toward Lartal.

"Did you hear anything, Fontarge?" de Vallier asked.

"No, Captain."

De Vallier marked the points on the scrap of paper at his elbow, and shrugged. He dealt with steady fingers. Lartal, over the captain's shoulder, saw Dalame, who had stretched his head forward and to one side, listening, with the immobile expectancy of a bird-dog at point.

"Six cards," Lartal began.

Martillac came into the room, saluted. All three glanced up.

"Captain," the sergeant addressed de Vallier, "there's a queer sort of citizen just arrived from the outside. As he was alone, and held both hands up, we let him get right up to the wall. He said that he was coming with a message for you, Captain. So I threw him a rope and hoisted him in. I stripped him to the hide, in case he had a weapon about him. Nothing. So that I took him into the office, where he is waiting, with the native sergeant, Adama Gaye, and three privates guarding him."

De Vallier turned to Fontarge.

"My ears are keener than yours, it seems—just by way of scoring a small personal satisfaction."

He addressed the sergeant:

"Did he ask for the post commander, or for me in particular?"

This time it was Lartal who glanced

toward Fontarge. What personal business could any native have with de Vallier? Certainly, the captain would not carry his passion for rare weapons to the extent of transacting a purchase at such a time.

"Faith, Captain, he asked for you by name," Martillac replied. "Which rather knocked me in the stomach, I may say."

De Vallier smiled.

"All right, Martillac, I'll see him."

Lartal and Fontarge rose mechanically, as if to follow him. But de Vallier halted them with a gesture.

"I wish to be alone," he stated, and for the first time there crept a ring of command in his voice.

Lartal and Fontarge sat down again, while de Vallier left the room. They heard him order Martillac back to his post outside, before he entered the office, which was separated from the dining-room by the wide, gloomy hall.

Fontarge, with an ironical smile, drummed on the table and hummed softly.

Lartal brought his clenched fist down solidly.

"Fontarge, if you know the answer to this riddle, and are keeping it from me—"

"I know nothing more than I have told you. Word of honor!"

"Did you see the regal gesture, the shake of the head? Did you hear the voice? Did—"

"I'm thirsty," Fontarge interrupted. "Dalame! Get me the bottle in my room.

After the black had left, the lieutenant turned to Lartal—

"Now conclude."

"Dalame does not understand much French."

"He does not speak much, Lartal. But he has good ears, and is more devoted to de Vallier than the doggiest dog would be."

"Would he repeat anything?"

"Would he? Sergeant Adama Gaye is an old friend of mine; we were together in the last Samory Campaign. Another specimen who does not speak much French. Yet, what did de Vallier tell you of me in the office four days ago?"

"Nothing he has not told me before you, Fontarge."

"I know. He is not the sort to do that. But Adama Gaye did not know. He came straight to me with it, in a roundabout, diplomatic way. And, translated into his sort of French, which lacks the delicate shades of de Vallier's speech, it turned out to be: 'Lieutenant big fool'."

"That was the essence of it, I guess."

"More trouble than you'd guess has been caused by wagging tongues of boys and native troopers."

"But what has de Vallier to do with a native messenger, that need be kept from us? The ——! Our skins run as much risk as his."

"It's not strange that we are puzzled."

"There's nothing to do but wait," Lartal said.

"And struggle with a longing to press an ear against the door."

DALAME returned. He placed a bottle on the table beside another containing the same brand of liquor, from which Fontarge could have helped himself. There was no mistaking the allusion. Lartal shuffled the cards, and started a game of solitaire.

Ten minutes passed, fifteen, before the post commander reappeared. Lartal watched him covertly. But the captain's face was controlled, calm. Yet—and Lartal thought this significant—he who used alcohols sparingly now poured brandy into a glass and swallowed it at one gulp.

"Another game?" Lartal asked.

"No. It's too late—"

"What did the fellow want?" Lartal asked boldly.

"He came with some proposition. Of no interest to you at all. So little interest that I have already sent him back."

"Nothing to do with the post, then?" Lartal persisted.

"Nothing," de Vallier maintained, without taking offense at the other's insistence.

De Vallier changed his mind about the cards, and *piquet* was resumed. A possible beholder, unaware of Lartal's mission, would have seen nothing save three officers, deeply engrossed in cards. Fontarge compromised and gave Lartal much needed advice. At ten o'clock precisely, de Vallier motioned to Dalame, who took away the deck, and placed the bottles and glasses on the buffet.

But instead of rising and saying good night as was his habit, de Vallier remained seated, while the others, from courtesy, followed his example.

"You're interested in individual reactions, Lartal?" the captain asked. "You like to know how a certain type of man, under given conditions, will conduct himself?"

"Of course."

"For the last ten nights, I have been weeding out of a little romance of mine all unnecessary details," de Vallier went on. "I believe it is in my blood to write memoirs, as my honored father did. I know your discretion, and that of Fontarge. I care enough for your opinions, value them sufficiently to make you judges of my scribblings. In the drawer of my table, in my rooms, there is a stack of papers waiting for your inspection."

"For my part, I'll be pleased," Lartal floundered, bewildered by the unexpected turn.

"Amusing?" Fontarge questioned.

"I tried my best with poor material," de Vallier replied with a smile.

"And when will you—when will we have the opportunity?" Lartal asked.

"I have a few changes yet to make. But it is laid away, with your name on the top page."

"Nothing technical, Captain, I hope."

"Calm yourself, Fontarge. I'll tell you this much: The whole thing revolves around two problems, one social, one ethical."

De Vallier rose, and offered his hand to each man in turn. Frenchmen shake hands oftener than Anglo-Saxons, but de Vallier usually was reserved. Lartal and Fontarge answered his gesture cordially.

"What do you make of it?" Fontarge asked, after the captain had left, and the sound of his footsteps had dwindled up the stairs.

"On the surface, it's an explanation for many things. In reality de Vallier may be poking fun at us."

The lieutenant nodded thoughtfully. They ascended to the floor above, to Fontarge's room. But they soon agreed that with the wooden blinds down, there was not enough air; while if the blinds were put up and the lamp left burning, there were marksmen on the low dunes outside eager to place a bullet in a lighted target.

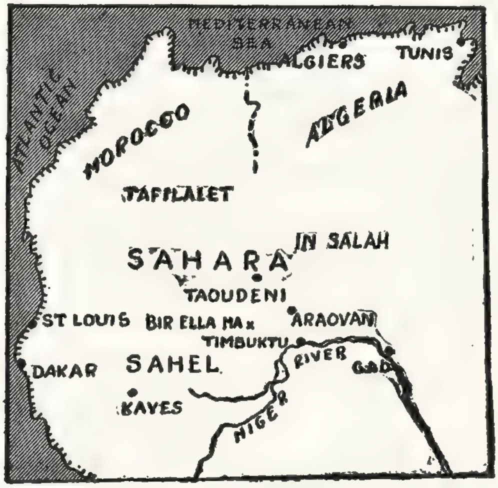
They went to the terrace. Lartal sagged wearily into one of the roughly made easy-chairs, while Fontarge stood with his hands in his pockets, inspecting the darkness, seeking for the reflection of fires against the sky.

At regular intervals, the cries of the sentries rang out;the rhythmical tread of the patrol that made the rounds of the walls throughout the night under command of one of the white sergeants, neared the officers' building, then receded. Some restless watcher on the dunes fired aimlessly, drawing the return shots of an over-eager sentry.

"I would like a definition of just what constitutes justification for a man in my position to show his authority," Lartal spoke up. "Should I have insisted that I know the native's message, or did I do right to refrain? I risked offending a man who is, after all, very decent to me—"

"Ask some one else," Fontarge retorted.

"Our rôle, to an unbiased observer, would appear pretty. Waiting to knock de Vallier when his heels are turned. Agitating in our heads the most dreadful suspicions, which we do not even credit after having imagined. What motive would de Vallier have to play a dirty trick? He is wealthy, isn't he?"



"Yes. The sword wedded to the money-bag for two generations. He could pay our pay, that of the sergeants and that of the blacks. Inherited a fortune from his maternal grandfather, and has some income from an uncle, and will roll in money after the death of his father. In fact—he is so well off, he's one man I'd never ask for a loan. To have importance in his eyes the loan would have to be so large that I could never repay it."

"He doesn't need money. He is happily married, has a son. Titled. Fontarge, what the —— can a man like that have to worry about?"

"Being alive."

"Profound, but not clear."

Fontarge did not reply, and for a long time Lartal was silent. He was too intrigued to think of sleep. And there was a certain twitching in his back that always preceded some sort of trouble. Long ago, he had come to the conclusion that this was the result of his own nervousness, and had nothing to do with uncanny premonition.

The patrol passed beneath them, Martillac's voice rose. The sentries answered.

Time passed. Then Fontarge leaned close.

"Some one's walking down the stairs, de Vallier's stairs," he murmured.

"Dalame, very likely."

"No. Boots—"

"De Vallier said he'd stay up tonight. I recalled now. He'll doze in the office, as we do."

Fontarge rose softly, and went to the edge of the terrace. He returned to Lartal's side.

"I guess you're right. He's walking toward the gate. Probably wants to check up, even on Martillac."

"For some reason," Lartal remarked, "I'm wide awake. If you care to, we'll join de Vallier, have Dalame bring a cool drink, and kill a couple of hours. There's no use separating. As Louis XIII used to say: 'Let's get bored together.' "

"Not a bad idea."

They descended into the yard, and walked toward the gate. Before long, they heard de Vallier's voice, in an undertone, then Martillac, who spoke loudly.

"I'M ready to obey, Captain," the sergeant was saying. "But I'd much prefer to have either the new captain or Lieutenant Fontarge present. They may blame me if anything happens to you."

"They'll know all about it tomorrow, Martillac. Open the gate."

Lartal laid his hand on Fontarge's arm.

"Captain," Martillac protested, "you shouldn't ask me to do that."

"I order you to, Martillac."

"All right. But if I get into trouble, you'll be to blame, Captain. At least let me go with you."

Lartal had heard enough to remove his last hesitation. He stepped forward.

"Here's Captain Lartal, Martillac. Hello, de Vallier, what's the matter?"

"The captain here says—" Martillac began.

"Sergeant, I order you to keep silent," de Vallier said sharply.

"You may resume your patrol, Sergeant," Lartal said, without waiting for de Vallier, official commander, to give the order.

Then he passed his arm under that of the captain—

"Come on back, and have a drink, won't you?"

De Vallier followed without protest. In the dining-room, after lighting the lamp, Lartal spoke again.

"I heard part of your conversation with Martillac. What is the meaning of this comedy? Are you mad, to attempt to stroll outside tonight?"

"As long as you have interfered, I repeat to you that it is my desire to go strolling, as you phrase it, alone."

"You know well that I will not allow that, de Vallier."

"I give orders here," was the reply.

Lartal drew the official order from his pocket, showed it to Fontarge, then handed the slip to de Vallier.

"I had not foreseen this," de Vallier concluded wearily. He sank into a chair, elbows on the table, his forehead against his clenched fists. Fontarge sat beside him. Lartal was touched by the grief-stricken attitude of de Vallier.

"You will forgive me, de Vallier, and admit I withheld the paper as long as I could."

De Vallier looked up.

"It's all right, Lartal. All right—you can go to bed now. Martillac will keep me here."

"But will you tell me why you want to go out? Is there any sense in courting assassination in the dark?" Lartal insisted.

Fontarge flushed angrily.

"Leave him alone, Lartal. If he knew why he wanted to go out he wouldn't have wanted to!"

He patted de Vallier on the back.

"Cheer up, it will pass. Any one can get a crazy notion in his head, and not be an everlasting fool because of it. You're nervous from being cooped in here day after day—I know how you feel. But it will end soon."

"Yes, soon," de Vallier repeated dully. "Lartal, I—but you wouldn't understand. Leave me, now, both of you. I can't order you any longer, but I'm begging a favor."

"Sure." Fontarge accepted, rising. "Get a few drinks, sleep, and we'll work you out of the mood in the morning, won't we, Lartal?"

"I hope so," Lartal agreed.

Then he added resolutely:

"Tonight, however, I will see you to your room, de Vallier. And I will place a guard at your door."

"Don't be a fool—" Fontarge protested. "He's—"

"Lieutenant Fontarge, will you bring Sergeant Adama Gaye and a private here?" Lartal ordered sharply.

Fontarge looked at him for an instant, then straightened.

"Yes, Captain."

When he had gone, Lartal sat down opposite de Vallier, and grasped his hands.

"Put yourself in my place, old man. What can I do? If you are genuinely crazy, you can't understand. If you're not, you know. Reverse rôles, de Vallier—would you allow me to go out, upon any pretext?"

"Were I you? No. I knew you were here to observe me—but I didn't believe they had gone so far as to—"

"As soon as this mess is over, you'll go home on leave. You're married, you have a son. Why do you want to go out and lose your head? Useless temerity is as vile as cowardice, in my opinion."

"Mine would not have been useless," de Vallier said.

Fontarge reappeared, followed by Sergeant Adama Gaye, a lanky Bambara, and a private of the same race.

"Thou dost know this?" Lartal asked the sergeant, placing the official seal under his eyes. "Yes, that is well. Captain de Vallier, here, is very sick. Tonight he wanted to go outside the walls—"

"That is not good," Adama Gaye remarked.

"I tell thee so that thou wilt not obey his orders any more. He will be well again soon; in the meantime, keep silence. And thy man, will he understand?"

"He understand what I tell."

"Good! Thou, Gaye, wilt stand by the door, up-stairs. The other man will be below the window. If either of you sees the captain trying to get out, stop him, and shout."

Then he spied Dalame, who had entered the room and taken his stand at the usual place. He recalled what Fontarge had told him of the black's devotion to de Vallier.

"As for thee, Dalame, go and sleep elsewhere, dost thou hear?"

"I hear, Captain."

"Just a minute, Dalame"—De Vallier turned and explained to Lartal—"As long as you take my servant from me, I'll tell him about his work for the morning."

"Go ahead," Lartal assented.

To his surprize, de Vallier spoke in dialect. Fontarge understood Dalame's tongue, and Sergeant Adama Gaye and the private were of the same race; Lartal saw no reason to believe that de Vallier would say anything other than the orders he had referred to.

"All through, de Vallier?" he asked when the captain had finished his recommendations.

"Thank you, yes."

"Sergeant, tell the man to take his place under the window. Right. Dalame, go, now. De Vallier, if you'll precede us—we're going to your room."

On the stairs, Fontarge asked de Vallier:

"What lingo were you using to Dalame? I have a nodding acquaintance with several dialects, but not that. Had words with a familiar ring—"

"That was Bakoue. Picked it up, as Dalame did, on the Sierra Leone frontier, when tracking the famous Khemoko Bilali. I often use it, but you never paid attention before."

Lartal hesitated. Should he secure Dalame, have him placed under guard? But, he chided himself, there was a limit where he must stop. Placing two sentries over de Vallier would prevent his escape, for he knew that neither Adama Gaye nor the private would trifle with his duty. Both were armed with rifle and bayonet. Dalame, detached to the officers' quarters as servant, could not obtain his rifle without awaking Sergeant Parneaux. The others would not lend him a weapon: There was severe punishment for damaged weapons.

Lartal and Fontarge halted on the threshold of de Vallier's room, until the captain invited them in.

DE VALLIER'S quarters, contrasted with the room of the average officer in an outpost, were luxurious.

There were leopard and lion skins for rugs. The walls were partially draped with blue and black Sudanese cloth. On one side of the room, twenty-five or thirty blades of Arab workmanship glistened, forming the rays of a great star of which a round Targui shield, made of elephant hide, was the center.

On a small table, a great bowl of lacquered wood, flanked by a book of cigaret papers, contained a heap of fine tobacco. A silver-mounted stand of glass bottles, which locked by means of a silver padlock, occupied a larger table. There were books on long shelves, not the green and yellow covered volumes of technical military information, but beautifully bound books. There were a half-dozen original water colors, signed by a famous artist.

"Sit down," de Vallier invited. "And to show you I bear no ill feeling, Lartal, have a drink."

"Every time I come in here," Fontarge said amiably, "I wonder why you ever go out."

De Vallier smiled, dipped long fingers into the bowl, and rolled a cigaret. To Lartal's delight, he was friendly, and insisted on touching glasses with the others.

"Come on, Lartal," he urged. "Smile! One would think you were the prisoner."

As for Fontarge, he conducted himself as if nothing unusual had occurred, looked at the books, borrowed one, admired the water colors. The sole reminder of the recent scene was Adama Gaye, who had sat down in the doorway, rifle across his knees, and with wide eyes contemplated the splendor of his captain's apartment.

"I feel the reaction," de Vallier remarked, later. "My nerves were pretty taut, I guess. Lartal, I hope that I will not give you any more unpleasant experiences."

Lartal took the hint, glanced at his watch.

"*Pardieu!* Almost two o'clock. Come on, Fontarge. Good night, de Vallier."

"For good and all, this time," de Vallier said. "By the way—that yarn I mentioned tonight—you and Fontarge may have it now."

He handed Lartal a rather voluminous sheaf of paper.

"Tell me what you think of it later. But frankly, eh? No compliments."

"Promised, de Vallier, the truth, nothing but the truth."

"Fine."

Lartal went out of the room on Fontarge's heels and closed the door. He took the rifle from the native sergeant's hands, removed the bayonet. Then he looped the leather strap around the handle, so that the gun was wedged firmly, butt end against one jamb of the door, muzzle against the other. As the door opened into the room, de Vallier could not attempt to leave without attracting Gaye's attention. The native grinned his understanding, and his admiration for the trick, which was new to him. Without a word spoken, he sat down, his broad shoulders resting against the panel.

To gain their wing of the building, the two had to go down-stairs, cross the lower floor, then ascend a flight of stairs to their rooms. The office, where one might sit with the light on and windows open, tempted them. Lartal went out upon the veranda near the dining-room, and saw the sentry stationed under de Vallier's window, bayoneted rifle on shoulder.

"I guess our friend is secure," he said.

"You rather exaggerated your precautions," Fontarge pointed out.

"One of two things is true: Either de Vallier is mad, then with the persistence of purpose of a madman he will try again to get out. Or he is sane, and had a very imperious reason to go. In either case, he must be watched."

"Perhaps so."

Fontarge indicated the bundle of papers that Lartal held—

"You're going to read it tonight?"

"Why not? It may achieve the seemingly impossible—make me sleepy. Probably incoherent."

"Settle down and read it aloud," Fontarge suggested.

Lartal assented, and looked at the first pages.

"Funny start," he said. "But listen: 'To my good friends, Paul Lartal and Hector Fontarge. Not alone because I care for their good opinion and to show gratitude for their friendship, but for a motive to be revealed later. It may interest the serious Lartal, and console the too ardent Fontarge with his present lot.' "

"You don't read clearly," Fontarge protested. "And with all due respect, I'll bring my chair nearer, and you can pass me the pages."

"All right," Lartal agreed.

He brought the box of cigarets nearer, and adjusted the wick of the lamp:

I

TO BE intelligible in a yarn that deals with in turn: A French historian, a tutor, a lieutenant of Sudanese *Spahis*, and the Moorish leader, Moktar el Khiani, also known as El Filali (The Man from the Tafilalet Oasis), I am compelled to start at the beginning.

My father, Jerome de Vallier, having lost a limb on the battlefield, was forced to abandon all hope of a military career. He retired when still a young man. To stifle to some extent his regrets, he turned to writing of the disastrous war, fought every engagement over again, on paper. And he proved, on paper, that victory might have been won with a little more thought of the Motherland and less of personal ambition.

Gradually, he became more and more interested in his work, and shunned crowds. He left Paris for a country mansion he had inherited, located in Western France, in the province of Maine. There he lived with his books and his rancour. My arrival did not change his mode of life. My chief distraction when a child was thumbing the pages of albums, uniform after uniform, Zouave after Turco. I may say that I learned to read in de Marbot's Memoirs. By the time I was ten years old, I was fed up, unutterably fed up.

I attended school in the nearest village for a few years. Then I went to boarding school. I was starved for companionship, at least for a companion who talked of other things beside battalions and field fortifications. Yet I knew little else myself. The school turned out to be another prison, where I did not even have the occasional relaxation of fishing and hunting, as back home. I grew up in loneliness.

Other boys looked forward to vacation time. Quite frankly, I did not know which I hated more, school or home. During the summer, it was pleasant to roam in the woods, but the meals could not be avoided. We had Chanzy's retreat with the broth, Bourbaki's Campaign in the East for desert, with Sedan recurring like a mournful motive. And when my father, having exhausted the Franco-Prussian War as a field, ventured into the Napoleonic era, it was worse.

My mother was little consolation. A splendid woman, intensely devoted to her husband. She had interested herself in the research work, at first to please my father, then for her own enjoyment, having been caught in the current.

While dimly conscious that there existed other horizons for a boy, I was too solidly grounded in filial duty to think much about changing my ways. I suffered, but did not speak. At eighteen, I passed the examination that admitted me to St. Cyr, to study for a commission. Others were plunged into the work unexpectedly. To me, there was no change. I became a star pupil with ease, happier, even in the cloistered life of the Military School, because of the compulsory physical exercises.

At twenty I was graduated number three in my class. I could have chosen the Engineers or the Artillery. But against the advice of my father, who told me that the next war would be won by engineers and artillerymen, I elected to serve in the cavalry, the light cavalry. I entered the *Chasseurs à Cheval*. Sky-blue tunic, black braid, red breeches, and a plumed shako. My first garrison was Vesoul, a charming little city, wide open to an alert young fellow with a distinct craving to learn the more cheerful sides of existence.

My grandfather had left me something over eight hundred thousand francs. He had been fond of me, and I think he rather pitied me, for he, too, had suffered from an overdose of history when sojourning with his son-in-law. I therefore had an income of two hundred louis a month, amply sufficient in a provincial city.

The explosion that followed the release of feelings held back for twenty years did not contribute to my popularity with the squadron commander. Nevertheless, he was patient for several months. But when he interfered, he was harsh. He said that out of consideration for a family bearing a most honored name, he had withheld comment, but that there were limits to that which might be done in Vesoul by an officer of *Chasseurs*. The brigadier-general himself, informed of my latest escapade, emphatically suggested that I keep to my quarters for thirty days.

I came out of my enforced rest much calmer. Then the major, still out of regard for my family, guided my life with careful hands, severed my gay connections, and introduced me into respectable society. For two or three months I yawned constantly.

At last I met a girl, a very charming girl.

Her cause for unhappiness was the very opposite of mine. I had been too confined in my family, and she had had no family. Daughter of a captain who had died in China, her mother dead, she had become a sort of tutor in one of the families which I had visited under the watchful eye of the major. She was naturally gay, and wilting in the gray background of a retired magistrate's household. Her position, midway between a servant and a teacher, was unpleasant. She was as bored as I was in such surroundings. We arranged to meet outside. There are many pleasant walks near Vesoul.

At the end of a few weeks we were engaged. I wrote home, believing, with youthful trust, that my choice would be accepted with enthusiasm. But my father, who had not left his study for years, came to Vesoul by the first train. He evoked many reasons against my marriage. He informed others. As he was esteemed by my superiors, they sided with him, and I found myself caught in red tape, listened to endless speeches about hasty weddings, lasting griefs and wrecked careers.

My father, who prided himself on his extreme tact, approached my fiancée, and offered her money to release me. The best excuse I can claim for him is that he misunderstood the situation. I quarreled with him, tried to resign from the army. I could not, short of open scandal. It seems easy enough to resign, until one comes up against the blank wall of a group of gray-pelted asses, who smile benignantly, and advise—advise.

Legally, I could not do anything toward marriage. I could not marry without parental consent until I had attained my twenty-fifth birthday. One can serve one's country, one can vote, but one does not know enough to get married. That's the law. No path around the difficulty, in France. I questioned a public official, offered him more money than he earned in two years, in ten years. He informed me that he would be fined three hundred francs—and imprisoned for a year should he help me. And the marriage would not be legal. There were England, Switzerland. But the question of residence arose. It could not be done. If I left my garrison without permission I was a deserter.

SUDDENLY I was given three months' leave of absence, and received from my father a ticket for southern France. I landed in a little fishing village on the Atlantic shore one fine morning, with plenty of money, a few bags, and orders to stay quiet for twelve or thirteen weeks. I was aware that at the same time pressure would be brought to bear on my fiancée. But I was tired by the long controversy, dazed, without a shred of will left.

The village assigned as my residence was a resort which was frequented by many artists, male and female. Father broadly hinted that he had picked it out so that I would be at liberty to forget my troubles. For several days I roamed gloomily on the beach. Then I made the acquaintance of a young man who sketched for a racy weekly, and illustrated on the side. He had contracted to paint a series of pictures for a book on Light Cavalry, and was in a hurry, not having much money. In a few words, I supplied him with the needed details, on *sabretache* and *dolman*. To a man who has earned his daily bread by drawing undulating curves, horses and sabers were nothing. In ten days he had completed his work, and received his pay. He was grateful, asked me what he could do for me. He was a sort of Bohemian, took his own affairs lightly, but I soon convinced him of my unhappiness.

"I'll fix it," Herscher said.

He was lazy as a rule, but not too lazy to help a friend. He went to Vesoul, and returned with my fiancée.

"Look here, Gontrand!" he said on the next day. "At this rate you'll never get anywhere. And women change. She may get tired of waiting. Suppose the three of us hire a fishing boat, and sail down to Spain?"

"What for?" I asked.

"Superb innocence!" he shouted. "Ask no more questions."

Two days later we landed in Spain. My friend borrowed a few louis from me and vanished into the nearest village. He returned an hour later.

"Is your father religious? Your mother?" he asked.

"Yes—"

"Then it's all settled," he declared.

That night, in the church, we were married by a priest. The marriage would not be strictly legal in France, but Herscher was of the opinion that my father would not interfere.

"Anything he does," he explained, "will become known, cast opprobrium on 'The History of the Franco-Prussian War', 'Souvenirs of a Cuirassier,' and other respectable tomes. He wouldn't spare you, but he would spare his brain-children."

He was wrong. My father did not attempt to break the marriage, but he refused his consent to a civil ceremony, despite the fact that the religious rites had been performed. He informed me that my presence home with my wife would not be welcome.

I obtained my transfer to another garrison town, where less would be known of my personal history. Gossip spreads. On the surface, all went well. But public disapproval in a small city is a deadly fog, imperceptible, but ever present. The men were quite friendly. But the women, the women. We did not care in the least. I was interested in my work. At the end of two years no one seemed to remember that there was the least thing wrong with my marriage. In fact, the religious element, the conservative element, showed evident esteem for us.

I was a lieutenant, and nearing my twenty-fifth birthday. On that day I would be able to make the required summations to my father, and if refused consent, go through the civil ceremony without parental approval. There were but a few months to wait.

Out of a clear sky came my transfer to the Sudan. As a rule a man had to beg for such an opportunity. Many were eager to risk fever, spears and bullets for the sake of promotion and decorations and, perhaps, to be just, for the sake of adventure. The massacre of the Bonnier Column had recently filled the papers. The Sudan was a dangerous country. To refuse to go would have been an admission of cowardice. I accepted, although it wrecked my plans. How much my father had to do with my transfer may be surmised. It was too well timed to be accidental.

I packed up and left.

To be absolutely frank, I was glad to go. Garrison life is deadly, monotonous. I had been married two years. By the time I reached Kayes, the civil marriage was the last thought in my mind. Major Joffre had avenged Bonnier, but there was enough work left to be done. I served on the Sierra-Leone frontier. Then near Niroro, under fat Captain Vaslon. He was celebrated for his marital misfortunes, and urged his men to the attack to the call of—

"Forward, Cuckolds!"

Poor captain—he vomited his life out with black water in the hospital. There were others, great fighters, a choice crowd. Most of them have gone by now. I was wounded, and offered leave of absence, after being out eighteen months. But there were few officers left and many troubles. I refused leave, crawled out of bed after three weeks and resumed service.

My heart was in the fight, my sole interest was in my men. I stayed on until I had been in the Sudan more than thirty months. I was promoted to captain, appointed to command Bir Ella Ma, newly constructed at the time. The post had its bad points. Whoever designed it—I know his name—might have foreseen that large windows would give an entrance to bullets, and would have chosen openings in a broken line. But the post had its charms.

It was near Bir Ella Ma that I met Moktar El Khiani, more than a year ago.

II

MY LIEUTENANT was a short, pot-bellied fellow named Ambier. He was well known in the Sudan. A young man, twenty-seven, I believe. But when one beheld that fat face, the drooping, heavy lids, the tired lines grooving his cheeks, it was easy to believe him old and fatigued. Undermined by fevers and dysentery—he seemed to collect illnesses as others collect postage stamps—he had little strength left in his body. Yet he was brave as a sword.

He had bad habits: Drink and sloth. He had forgotten table manners, if he had ever known them. The front of his tunic was always spotted with grease. The effort to urge his servant to polish the brass buttons was too much for him. And not an ounce of dignity. He would kick a private in the seat of the pants as a joke. His language was shocking. The blacks learn such words far more rapidly than they learn the routine orders. The yard echoed from morning until night with imprecations, through which pierced the melodious boom of my lieutenant.

Drink—drink, but never drunk. Always on the border line, able to stand straight, to walk from place to place erect and unswerving, to ride a horse well. Yet his brain was pickled in the stuff. I could have reported him. But can one report a man who wears medals that he had earned at imminent risk of his life? A man who would allow himself to be hacked to bits for his chief? A man who at times would frankly admit:

"I'm a pig, I know. But what can I do about it?"

A man, moreover, who had aged before his time through diseases contracted while serving the flag? No man living would have lifted a finger to bring disgrace upon him.

I spoke to him but once. He was so plainly hurt, so plainly incapable of mending his ways, that I left him alone. Ambier is living near Nice now, trying to salvage what is left of his body. It is probable that he will live on. I have no wish to be spiteful, but a full description is needed for understanding of what followed. I do not want to be considered mad.

One night Ambier had grated on my nerves more than usual. He had thrown crockery at the servant, cursed the orderly, ending as always with a laugh and a tip. Before dinner, by way of appetizer, he had imbibed half a bottle of absinthe. And he set out to finish the other half as soon as the dishes were off the table. Half water, half absinthe, a lump of sugar—and sip—sip—sip.

He was seated near me, heavy with fat, loose fat retained on his frame in spite of sicknesses, unhealthy fat. It was a tepid evening. The water from the ewer was cool. He perspired.

I had never seen a man perspire so profusely. And, somehow, the drops seemed greenish, like drops of absinthe oozing from his pores. The oily perspiration slithered from his forehead down his cheeks, and dripped from his chin upon his chest through the unfastened collar. From time to time, he wiped one hand over his face, then cleaned it upon his trousers. Dazed by absinthe, the queer, green pupils of his eyes floated in the whites, he was reptilian, toad-like.

He would try to talk, then lapse into a panting silence, staring, sometimes at me, more often at something in the corner of the room which I could not see. The first specter of delirium, perhaps?

In my body, every nerve was taut, vibrating like a violin string. I had scarcely touched the food. I felt helpless to aid him, much as I desired to. A scolding would have tortured him, without hope of effect. Nine o'clock came. He should have gone out to inspect the post. But I was glad to escape without offending him. I suggested that he finish his bottle in peace, leaving me to go the rounds.

I walked out into the yard. The moon had changed the sand to snow. The wind was cool. I could breathe easier. Although I had not absorbed a drop of alcohol in days, I felt a strange drunkenness rising in me. After my forced association with the man in the room, the open seemed intensely clean, and I felt unwilling to reenter the building, even to reach my quarters, where he would not follow me.

In the stables, a native non-com was on duty. I recall every detail plainly, even now after more than a year has elapsed. I already had my horse, Griot—I had purchased him in the Macina region. He is a good horse, bigger and finer than the horses of the Sahel. A real horse. When the animal heard my voice, while I was conversing with the sergeant, he neighed.

To this day, I don't know what prompted me, but I ordered him saddled. The native non-com was an intelligent fellow, but obedient. He obeyed without a question, just as he would have obeyed had I placed a revolver in his hands and ordered him to blow my brains out. He saddled Griot, led him out.

The gate was opened for me. I went out. If ever I have been foolhardy, it was at that moment, which was the source of all that followed. But it must be recalled that I had spent an unpleasant evening, the culmination of many unpleasant days. I craved solitude more than I had ever craved anything.

The dunes were deserted. In those days, the sheep-herders of the friendly tribes had not yet realized that the post was a protection. Or if they had, they did not wish to avail themselves of it.

Griot is a fast horse, and in twenty minutes I was far away, four or five kilometers, where Fontarge, since then, once halted a group of native salt smugglers. He will recall the spot.

To be alone in the moonlight—on horseback! The animal gave me a sense of companionship, yet did not break into my thoughts with silly remarks as a man would have done. After the lieutenant's mournful belchings, the quiet and cleanliness of the moonlit sands was intensely restful.

Gradually, however, it occurred to me that perhaps I was doing a foolish thing. I remembered that I was responsible not only for my own safety, but for that of my men, of the post. I decided to go back.

III

THEN I paused to wonder. With the first admission that danger might lurk about, I had a very definite sensation running over my skin, which was very much like fear.

Fear, I have learned, is a foe that gains strength with each victory. It must be defeated at every encounter. When I was a kid, I was afraid of the dark as nine out of ten kids are. Survival of an old instinct. The cave-man can not have felt too cheerful in the gloom of his cavern, hearing powerful beasts roaming outside. I would awake in the middle of the night, and feel my skin surge in little waves from heels to head. Then, I would get out of bed, put on slippers, and march through the house, explore the black pocket of the attic, opening closets, oozing terror all the while. It was good discipline, although I had paid for the acquired valor with bruised shins and knees.

So this night on the dunes, when I identified my sensation with that early emotion, I was far from pleased. I decided that the remedy that had once cured me would again prove efficacious.

Moreover, I was morally certain that there was no real danger, that the dunes concealed nothing more terrifying than had the empty closets of the attic. Ambier, the lieutenant, made up for his faults, when in action. Although physically weak himself, he had a knack all his own in handling a troop of *Spahis*. He had scoured the region that same afternoon, and it was unlikely that the Kel Antassars would be anywhere near the post.

I kept on for a few kilometers. There is a gully between two high, rock-strewn gray mounds. I have camped there in the last few months more than once, with Fontarge, on hunting expeditions. I came to the entrance of the gully. The path ahead was lost in shadow. I know perfectly well that here again my behavior does not seem sensible, even plausible. Again, I decided to face what I was certain was an imaginary peril. My determination grew and crystallized, when I found myself shaking nervously.

"Another empty closet," I murmured.

I entered the gully resolutely. It was, I knew, less than two miles long. Once crossed, I would circle back, and turn toward Bir Ella Ma.

I had proceeded perhaps six hundred meters, and Griot was giving signs of alarm. I paid no attention, thinking that he did not like the pebbly soil under his hoofs. As the gorge narrowed, I was compelled to slow down to a walk. Above, I could see the brilliant sky, crusted with stars. It was during one of these poetic contemplations that I was seized by the leg and drawn from the saddle.

I am reputed to have more than ordinary strength, but the hands that held me bit into my flesh like steel grips. I did not struggle long, for part of wisdom consists in knowing when to accept evident facts. I was caught, and well caught.

To say that I was optimistic about my situation would be a lie. There were, and still are, many people about Bir Ella Ma who think they have a grudge against the French. The Republic's uniform is not a guarantee of immunity. Men who risk their own necks have a surprizing lack of consideration for the necks of others, I knew.

At first, I believed myself in the hands of Kel Antassar Tuareg. From the little I could discern, my captors were tall, wiry, and rough. While I do not speak Arab with faultless grammar, I can converse intelligently in that tongue. Had my guards been mutes I could have obtained as much information as I did with my loud questions.

A sharp, unyielding object was placed in the small of my back, and I was made to understand that I was expected to move forward. Griot, who had prejudices, made more fuss than I did. Probably because of the smell. It was all too certain that my new companions did not make a practise of bathing in rose-scented waters.

I advanced, stumbling occasionally, bitterly regretting my desire to investigate dark places. All the more bitterly because I felt that I would not have the opportunity to profit by this lesson. One seldom does in the desert. At last, I was aware that we were passing through a camp of considerable importance. Well guarded—my captors, who had been posted in the gully, replied to three challenges before we came to a halt.

One of my guards stirred up a fire, and I was told to sit down and await the arrival of a chief. The man who held the knife against my back sat down also, following my movements with such precision that not once did the pressure relax.

During the wait, my belt attracted attention. It was removed from my waist, by the same chap, I believe, who tore the brass buttons from my tunic. Another man, evidently hopeful, was fingering my riding boots when the chief arrived.

The chief was Moktar El Khiani.

He is a sort of eagle-faced gentleman, with a snowy beard. I knew of him, for he had been coming to the Sudan across the Desert, following the Iguidi route, for many years. Clad in white, his sash weighted down with weapons like a Mameluk's, he evidently took himself seriously.

I believed it best to be polite, very polite, without abandoning however the bearing that should characterize a French officer on grave occasions. I warned him that any injury done to me would be swiftly avenged. He was polite also. He ordered the fellow with the knife to move away a bit, and offered me a cup of tea.

He spoke French after a fashion, a queer French which was not the *sabir* of the Algerian Arab. In spite of his courtesy I would have given much to be back with my lieutenant and his absinthe. The first greeting disposed of, Moktar spoke briefly, leaving no possibility of misunderstanding.

He declared that I had been captured at an unfortunate moment—for me. He and his band, having given Bir Ella Ma a wide berth, had slipped north of us a few weeks before, to operate in the region of Gao. They had hooked up with one of our detachments and been handled without gloves. Moktar had left seven of his men on the spot. One of them, his son. He had lost a score of camels, many oxen, and a collection of slaves, each and every one a perfect specimen, that would have brought fancy prices in Morocco, as do slaves who come from tall, well-conditioned, selected stock. Moktar informed me that he had visited sixteen villages to obtain twelve fine slaves. To lose them was a calamity.

I have learned since that Captain Mesnard commanded that detachment. He is one of my best friends, but he had done me a nasty turn without being aware of it. Moktar and his men were not far from believing that I had been sent by Allah to pay, in a certain measure, for the damage done by my countrymen. That I was worth twenty camels, many heads of cattle, seven lives and a choice group of slaves, was flattering. A tradesman of our own race, tamed by centuries of restraint, becomes savage over a money loss. These men were in a like mood, and armed with scimiters, knives, rifles. I wondered which implement would be used on me.

I thought of the fat lieutenant. He would be called upon to explain my disappearance. The native sergeant would say that I had gone out, alone. That would cause endless talk.

"I'm ready," I told Moktar, seeing no reason for delay.

"In the morning," he replied: "When all can see."

That did not please me. I was aware that chance of escape was remote. Even were I able to get out of the camp, the Moors, who ran barefooted, while I had boots to proclaim my progress, and who are accustomed to traveling in the dark on foot, would swiftly overhaul me. Even my comparative freedom was taken from me. My ankles were lashed together, my wrists bound with a leather strap, the end of which was held by a warrior. Moktar ordered me placed under a small tent with my guards.

To spend one's last night under the stars might be inspiring. But I was to lie in proximity to a quartet of smelly Moors. Their exhalations filled the tent. They slept noisily, save one, who held the leather thong. Whenever they turned over their hardware clinked and clashed against the metal utensils in the tent.

I WAS there like a sheep awaiting the butcher's knife. An experience not to be envied. Too many thoughts float up into the consciousness from the recesses of the mind. Almost as if each brain-cell had a door, which opened and released the imprisoned thoughts for a last review. I worried over Bir Ella Ma, the safety of my men. Then my thoughts wandered back to France—to my childhood.

The majority of my boyhood companions would die in bed, obese and full of years. I thought of my father, and was inclined to smile. In preserving me according to his code, he had certainly placed me in a mess. Not until then did I think of my wife, of my son who had been born a few months after my departure from France.

Possibly, I had unconsciously shunned the thought, as likely to fray my nerves before the final ordeal.

The vision of my wife and of the boy I had never seen crashed into my brain violently. Something was left undone which should have been done. I had been caught in the current of war in the Sudan and had forgotten much. A man's memory may fade like an old photograph. My life seemed to have split in two, one half vague and indistinct, that of France. The other fully lighted, vigorous, the life we live here.

I recalled that I was not a free man. My life was not my own. All of us are at times startled by the surging to the surface of things forgotten. A man halts in the street, remembering that he has left a water-tap running, or that his last gesture before closing the door of his home was to throw the match with which he had lighted his cigar into the waste-basket. Such was my feeling, magnified many times.

Deep within ourselves, not one of us believes that he will be killed in action. It is one of the great mercies of nature that the human being is unable to think clearly on that subject. Death is something that happens to others. A man can conceive of another lying on the sand with a hole in his temple. For a moment a man can imagine his own finish, but soon the mind refuses to contemplate on that subject.

Like the man who is awakened to be taken to the guillotine, I was forced to realize the truth while lying in that small tent. De Maupassant wrote a story called "The Coward." The man who was to fight a duel on the next day, and took his own life, preferring to end the suspense immediately. I would have cut my throat, had it been possible, to still my torment.

A detail had occurred to me. My son's legitimacy might be questioned. From what I have written you have gathered that I had not been a doting father. In a strange sort of way, I believe that I was a bit jealous of that child that I had not seen. My wife's letters were full of his doings, and showed much less concern for my well being than formerly. She no longer complained of loneliness. It is a nasty, unnatural type of jealousy, although I'll wager that more men suffer from it than will admit.

The arrival of a third party had contributed no little to my indifference toward home. If there was anything paternal in me it had not shown itself.

Now, Death was shutting down like a lid, a lid that could never be lifted. About to take the long jump, I was discovering all that I should have done. My monstrous egotism. My lack of concern for my family had progressed so far that for several months preceding my capture I had scarcely glanced at the letters I received. I opened them only to assure myself that the two were in good health. My own letters had been laconical, cold. The flame had been burning low.

In the tents, I strove to remember all details. How soon he had walked, how soon he had talked. Why? I presume it was because in him some of my own personality would survive. I would not be quite dead. A son, another *me*. I recalled that his mother wrote in one of the letters I had treated so lightly, that he walked as I walked, that his eyes were the same color as mine.

I was sickened by the thought of his future, the possible humiliations. For he would grow up to be a man, with a man's understanding, a man's capacity to suffer.

I struggled, tried to rise. My guards tumbled upon me, cuffed me. Desirous of the end, I fought, bit a hand here, an arm there. My dignity was quite gone as a matter of fact. My guards grew voluble, made a lot of noise. And Moktar, awakened, came to inquire. Once again I was carried to the fire.

"Thou art afraid," Moktar said.

"No. Make an end of me tonight, and see."

His teeth showed yellow in the white beard. He sat down beside me.

"I know thou dost not fear death," he said. "For men wearing that—" he touched my uniform—"never do. What is wrong with thee?"

He smiled as he spoke. I don't know exactly how I started, but I found myself telling my story. Moktar is all man. He has that mysterious quality that makes a leader of men—magnetism. Much that I told him was obscure, undoubtedly. The legal tangle of my marriage for one thing. Obscure it would be to a gentleman who marries and divorces at will. Our somewhat complicated system of legitimacy amused him. But he understood my fears. A man's son should stride into the world with his head high. He admitted that he preferred to have lost his son in combat than to have seen that son deprived of his birthright.

While he was talking he reached forward, knife in hand, and severed the thongs that bound me. My guards had filched my cigarets; he offered me a pipe, tobacco. He was deeply interested in what was to him the usages and customs of a strange people.

With his patriarch's beard, his intelligent eyes, I could well imagine him attired in a black gown, a grave, thoughtful magistrate of our own race. He came naturally by his judicial mien, for he was arbiter of such questions among his people.

"How old is thy son?" he asked.

"Two years old."

He stroked his beard.

"In thy absence, *Sidi Capitaine,* can nothing be done? After thy death, all is finished?"

"All is finished."

He meditated.

Seized by an insane hope, I begged him to allow me to write a note, which would serve as a will. He could easily find a way to place it in the hands of some Frenchman, I added.

"Is there an oath, among thy people, which binds without chance of escape? With us the Koran permits a lie to save one's head, but we have other oaths which are never broken."

"Moktar," I replied. "A man wearing such garments as I wear, speaks the truth, and needs no fine oaths."

He laughed, saying that he had heard differently, cited the breach of faith of the French Government toward Abd el Kader, the Algerian, who was promised freedom to gain his surrender, then was placed in prison for several years. I reminded him that the men who had promised, men who wore uniforms, had struggled long to have the promise fulfilled.

Moktar rose, and ordered that Griot be brought forward. As if by magic, my buttons, belts and revolver reappeared from the capacious pockets of *gandouras.* Among the many small personal articles thus returned to me was a miniature of my wife in a gold frame.

Moktar took it.

"Give me thy word," he said "that thou wilt come back to me after arranging all in thy country. Give me thy word that when I again come to the *Tekrour* (The Sudan), thou wilt be here. And that when I send thee that which I now hold in my hand, thou wilt come to this place, or where I order thee to come. Then, what has been left undone this time shall be done."

"I give my word," I replied. "Perhaps, for I am but a small leader, and not master of my movements, I shall not be at Bir Ella Ma but at Gao or Timbuktu."

Mokart's eyes smiled.

"Wherever thou art in the desert, or near the desert, I can find thee. For I know all that occurs between *Moghreb*—Morocco—and *Tekrour.*"

"Then all is well," I said. "And I shall come back."

We touched hands, and I rode away. The groups of warriors parted before my horse, silently.

I was free, and racing back toward the post.

IV

WHEN leaving Bir Ella Ma I had not thought to take a helmet. I believed that long before dawn I would be back at the post. Therefore, I had worn a cloth *kêpi.* It had been lost during the struggle in the gully. I was bareheaded.

I must have remained longer in the tent than I first believed. For the sun rose swiftly, and the heat grew. It would have been an easy matter to have obtained material for a turban out of my tunic, which was in rags. But, engrossed in my thoughts, it was some time before I became aware of the danger I had incurred. The walls of the post were already visible. And so I trotted on, into the yard, past the astonished sentry, and handed Griot over to Dalame, the only man in the post who had noticed my absence.

As I dismounted, I staggered. At first I credited the weakness to fatigue, and tried to reach the officers' quarters without assistance. Then I fell like a log, face on the sand, knocked out as cleanly as if struck on the nape of the neck with a club.

I remember nothing of the trip from Bir Ella Ma to Timbuktu. I was the owner of one of the most beautiful cases of sunstroke known. That I survived is a miracle. Weak as a rag, rather incoherent, I fear, I was useless. Leave of absence was granted me. I needed a change of climate, the invigorating air of the north.

When I reached my own apartment, determined to waste no time in straightening my social situation, my wife and son were not there. I decided that their whereabouts would be indicated in some letter that had passed me on my way home. I questioned the cook, the maid, whose addresses I fortunately remembered. I inquired of acquaintances. No one could tell me where they had gone.

I immediately took steps to locate them. In the meanwhile, sick and lonely, my days numbered, I thought of my father and mother and forgave many things that had appeared monstrous to me years before. I left at once to join them.

The first living thing I saw in their home was a little fellow, scarcely out of skirts, sprawled on the floor of the hall. He recognized me, from my photos I suppose, for he called me "Papa." My wife was there, with my mother and father. I was overjoyed that the civil marriage could take place without annoyance. Father had abandoned military history for natural history; stooped to low tricks to win my son's affection:

"See, there's a lion, Jean. Your papa shot lions in the Sudan."

Toward the end of my leave, my father took me aside, to talk seriously about my future. He said that he could arrange my transfer from the Sudan to a comfortable garrison town not far off. In fifteen years, he guaranteed that I would be a colonel. And figured that I could grab a brigadier's berth before fifty. I had done enough, he said. There were many men of my rank eager to go to the Sudan.

I was tempted. Life in France drew its tentacles close about me—I have always liked comfort. But I knew that it was out of the question for me to stay. I retrenched myself behind a simulated ambition for military experience that would prove valuable when the long awaited return match with the Prussians came. My father accepted my patriotic motives and bowed before my will.

The day of my departure came swiftly. To those who had seen me come back with a whole skin after the last campaigns against Samory and the fighting on the desert fringe, my return to France after two years was certain. For then there was not that agonizing twisting of the heart that had existed when I had left before. My wife and mother were tolerably composed. And I am sure it was I who suffered most, when I leaned out of the compartment window for the last kisses. No man ever left for Africa with a heavier heart than mine that day.

The first night on the steamer, and for the first time in my life, I managed to get beastly drunk. A pretty sight for passengers. A captain, in the respected red and blue of the *Spahis*, with a brand new cross on his tunic, staggering blindly from the bar to his stateroom. The desire to numb myself with absinthe was overwhelming. The wonder is that I did not become like Ambier. I had beaten down the lust for drink by the time I reached Dakar.

Luckily, Bir Ella Ma was without a captain. I came up. The governor had asked me, should I feel the slightest strain, to let him know. He was aware, he declared, that an attack of sunstroke, such as I had suffered, might have an after effect.

When I heard that Moktar el Khiani had mopped up the Ruault detachment, I knew that he was coming down toward Bir Ella Ma. I entertained for a time the idea of offering him ransom, feeling that he would accept. I could easily spare one hundred thousand francs, more than enough to tempt him—the price of a thousand pack camels, of eight hundred horses. But I soon rejected the idea. Two hundred and fifty francs would purchase a rifle in the Tafilalet, a modern repeating rifle. To save my life I could not arm three to four hundred men against us.

The bargain had to be kept.

But I knew that Fontarge would be questioned as to my disappearance. Others would imagine some tragedy. There was need of another officer at Bir Ella Ma. I wrote to the governor, said that I felt the need of another officer in case accident should happen to me. If the good man believed me mad, I do not blame him. Captain Lartal came.

And since, I have waited . . .

LARTAL passed the last page to Fontarge.

The lieutenant, his brows wrinkled, scanned the lines, and placed the paper on top of the other sheets.

"And what is that?" he asked, indicating other papers that Lartal was thumbing.

"A sort of conclusion—dated today, or as midnight has long since dropped into the past, yesterday evening." Lartal read:

"TONIGHT, the messenger came. He brought with him the miniature, and word from El Khiani. Moktar is waiting, and I can not fail to keep my promise. I am perfectly aware that should I have spoken to you, Lartal, or you, Fontarge, you would have dissuaded me, or prevented me from leaving by force.

"Yet, were either of you in my position, would you fail? We soldiers represent a race apart, nearer to the fighting men we are now coping with, than the smug Frenchmen of our own race. With our civilized way of scoffing at the old code, we live and die by it. When you read this, I will be gone, so that I can write without that false sense of shame that gags us always. I am a soldier, and I am childishly proud of my red tunic and blue trousers. I obey a soldier's code. You two, and myself, are soldiers by choice.

"I consider that my end will have a certain elegance. The time will come, if you live long enough, when you will envy me. It is exhilarating to say: I could have lived, at the price of a broken promise. But I could not accept life. Do not regret me.

"You will destroy these papers, and banish from your memory the personal details I have given. It did not come without a struggle, that full confession. But I knew well that curiosity is all compelling. When back in France, you would have tried to discover my reasons for seeking death. By a little investigation in my former garrison, you would have learned of my irregular union. You therefore would have laid to domestic troubles what I am about to do.

"I wish that one of you would take Dalame in his service. He is a good lad, as you know, and would march through fire for any one to whom he had granted his affection. To him, I have spoken, and he understood. He will be downcast for a while, and I ask you, for my sake, to be patient with him. I have provided for him otherwise. Lartal, will you try to obtain the cross for Martillac? Fontarge will tell you what the sergeant has done on various occasions, and as I have promised him to put in a good report, I trust that you will make good my promise.

"The time is growing short, and I must leave. Good-by—"

LARTAL was silent. Fontarge shrugged.

"Queer case," he declared. "And he most certainly would have carried out his plan. Is there anything else?"

"Yes, his will."

"Quite methodical, isn't he? Must feel highly ridiculous by now. What does he say?"

Lartal handed him the will.

"The disposition of my fortune has been provided for in a will now in the hands of my notary, in Orleans, France. At the last moment, a few provisions seemed necessary to me.

"I desire that the sum of six hundred francs a year, divided into twelve monthly payments, be paid to Lassana Dalame, private in the Second Sudanese *Spahis*, until his death.

"The books, furnishings such as chairs, tables that belong to me, the draperies, the collection of Arab weapons, the carpets and rugs, shall become the property of Hector Fontarge, to either keep for his own use, or dispose of, as he pleases. Exception made, however, of photographs and private papers, which I ask to be sent to my family in France.

"My horse, Griot, shall be given to Captain Paul Lartal, also my guns, Winchester carbine, heavy caliber rifle and revolver. If Captain Lartal, for any reason, has to leave the Sudan permanently, he shall give the horse only to a man known to him personally.

"The bottle-stand shall be given to Sergeant Adama Gaye, who has manifested admiration for it repeatedly. I ignore what use he will make of it, as he is a good follower of the Prophet, and does not use liquors. In case he prefers the cash it represents, the stand is worth fifty louis. Lassana Dalame shall be permitted to select, from my wardrobe, any articles he fancies.

"Signed: Gontrand de Vallier, Captain in the Second Sudanese *Spahis*."

"There's a post-script for you, Lartal," Fontarge said. "Listen: 'Lartal will explain to the Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Governor in Timbuktu, the reasons for my death. If it is possible to arrange matters, I would like it reported that I fell in action. I dislike the thought of having those dear to me learn that I was under sentence of death when with them the last time.' "

Lartal searched for a bottle, took a drink. Although he had prevented de Vallier's departure, he felt that the writing was sincere, that the man had really been determined to die.

"When he recovers his sanity," Fontarge said, "he'll nevertheless be a candidate for a strait-jacket, when he realizes what a fool he made of himself. Anything in a tragic style that ends without tragedy is comedy. I don't know whether it wouldn't have been kinder to let him go; he is crazy, and it's doubtful if he'll ever get better. Those long lasting touches of sun impair a brain forever. We can stop him now, but he'll do something just as foolish in France, get a new obsession. And, while we are hardened to such messes down here, his people will suffer when he accomplishes what he muffed today."

Lartal faced the lieutenant.

"The question is," he said slowly, "is the man crazy?"

Fontarge laughed.

"Of course he is. An insane man is like a man in a dream. He uses every incident to bolster his imaginings. De Vallier started with the idea that he was to die soon. When El Khiani came, he worked him into the frame of his ravings. You will note that when he wrote to the governor he made no mention of the Moorish chieftain. It is only since the talk of Moktar grew, after he attacked you and Captain Ruault in the north, that he mentioned him to me."

"But he did have sunstroke," Lartal maintained. "The messenger did come last night. I have heard of Ambier's degradation."

"You have never heard of a desert raider with the tactful generosity of Moktar el Khiani, Lartal?"

"No, I haven't heard," Lartal admitted. "But men with original ideas are found everywhere. Moktar may like to experiment. And what more tempting experiment than to test a Frenchman's faith? If de Vallier did not show up, Moktar and his men could spread the story. If he did come back, nothing was lost. As de Vallier wrote, our civilized reactions cloud the understanding of such a promise for us. But releasing a man on parole would appeal to a primitive such as Moktar."

"On that score, I won't contradict you. You know Arabs and Moors better than I do," Fontarge declared. "Presuming that he told the truth, what are you going to do, let him go?"

"I can't allow a man to go out to his death."

"If Moktar is the man you think him, he will again show generosity. He will say: 'Thou art a brave man, live on, I grant thee thy life.' And de Vallier will come back to us. A man can not be a gentleman one moment, and a savage the next."

"There, you are wrong. Or rather, Moktar will be a gentleman and a primitive at the same time. He would have de Vallier's head struck off as calmly as he gave him temporary freedom. He will think as you did a moment ago: A tragic happening that does not culminate in death is ridiculous. And Moktar el Khiani fears ridicule more than death."

"How are you going to act in that case, Lartal?"

"As soon as we are freed from the mob camping around here, I'll send de Vallier to Timbuktu, to have it out with the governor and come to a decision. The problem is too big for me to settle."

Fontarge scratched his head.

"These questions of honor, *à la Dumas père*, take my breath away. A moment ago, I was certain that de Vallier was mad. Now I'm growing to believe his tale."

"Have a drink," Lartal urged. "Then, after looking in to see if Adama Gaye is still awake at de Vallier's door, we'll go to bed. Speculating will not help."

Fontarge drank.

"Just a moment," he said: "If de Vallier told the truth, he will be worried at being kept in his room. If he's mad, he'll still be worried. That means he will be awake. Now recall this detail: The messenger brought the miniature. I have been living with de Vallier for several months, have been in his rooms hours at a time, seen his belongings. I am positive there was no miniature of his wife. Photographs, big and little, but nothing else. If the thing is there—"

"To tell the truth," Lartal remarked, "the miniature made me doubt. Why did Moktar keep it? Would not a simple message have served as well?"

"But the theatrical instinct of the fellow? Those primitives, as you say, have a strong sense of the dramatic. Everything must be symbolized by an object. In our fairy tales there must be a wishing ring. Aladdin must have his lamp. The object was needed, in Moktar's opinion. See?"

"By ——, Fontarge! Hasn't it struck you as peculiar that de Vallier, a reserved chap as a rule, handed us those pages, when he knew well that leaving was out of the question? Do you think he—"

Fontarge shook his head.

"No. We'd have heard the shot. Anyway, disposing of himself would not be paying his debt—real or imaginary—to Moktar. Had he seen that exit from his problem, he would have done it long ago."

"Nevertheless, something's wrong," Lartal insisted.

He led the way through the lower floor, and up the flight of stairs that connected the hall with the captain's apartment above.

As he reached the top of the stairs, he saw Sergeant Gaye, squatted in the very spot where the two officers had left him, the rifle still holding the door closed. In the bracket on the wall the kerosene lamp was flickering.

Gaye arose silently.

"Didst hear anything within the room?" Lartal asked him.

"No, Captain. Captain walk little, that's all."

Relieved, Lartal smiled toward Fontarge, then removed the rifle quietly and handed it to Adama Gaye.

Lartal hesitated, fist poised.

"Wouldn't it be decent to leave him alone?" he asked of the lieutenant in a low voice.

"Oh, I guess he'll be glad to talk. I tell you he can't have gone to sleep. Most likely, he's fretting in there, wondering what we think."

Lartal rapped gently on the top panel.

"Eh! De Vallier—"

No answer came.

Lartal's face reflected his renewed suspicion, and he rapped harder.

"De Vallier—de Vallier! This is Lartal, Fontarge—"

"THE door is not locked," Fontarge reminded him. "After what has occurred, I guess we're to be forgiven for entering." He added in a low voice, "There was no shot—"

Lartal pressed the handle, opened the door and peered in. The big brass lamp was lighted, the wooden blinds were down. The door leading to the bedroom was agape. No sign of de Vallier—Fontarge crossed the first room, entered the chamber. Lartal could see his back, illuminated by the lamp, moving like a large white patch in the semi-obscurity. What would the lieutenant find?

"Not here," Fontarge stated, coming back, his face very white, his lips trembling. "There's the bathroom. Look there, Lartal, look there—"

"Not there, either," Lartal said, after inspecting the bathroom.

He turned to Adama Gaye, who had followed them and now stood in the center of the floor:

"Thou art sure nothing was heard?"

"Nothing, Captain."

Lartal threw up the blind and stepped out on the flat area made by the roof of the down-stairs veranda. As Fontarge followed him, a native rifleman fired toward the window, the bullet clashing among the spears and swords on the far wall. Adama Gaye coolly leaned forward and blew out the light.

"Near—" Fontarge commented. "I felt it pass. One of us will get killed in all this nonsense."

Lartal, standing on the edge of the platform, bent over and saw the glint of a bayonet below. He called out to the sentry, who replied that the captain had not been seen by him.

"He must have gone somewhere," Lartal said. "The fellow has probably been asleep and won't admit it."

He lowered himself over the edge of the roof and dropped to the ground level, fell forward heavily. Without hesitation Fontarge followed him.

"De Vallier can not fly, —— take it!" Lartal grumbled. "He must have left tracks."

He called out to Martillac, who was still on duty. The sergeant came running, followed by the patrol.

At Lartal's request, he lighted the small lantern fastened at his belt, and the white men saw footprints made by booted feet, leaving the wall and directed toward the native lines.

"He's gone this way," Fontarge decided tensely. He stepped toward the sentry to accuse him of neglect. He looked closer.

"Dalame!"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Where's the other man?" Fontarge asked.

"Far—a little. Over there—" Dalame, without leaving the wall, gestured.

The private was found, around the corner, laid carefully out of sight in the shadow thrown by the building. He was bound and gagged, his face scratched. For a moment, he could not speak, indicating his throat with his fingers.

"I choke him little," Dalame admitted.

"And the captain is gone?" Lartal asked.

"The captain is gone—"

Lartal laid a restraining hand on Fontarge, for the lieutenant was very angry.

"Martillac, follow these prints until you are sure Captain de Vallier has left the post limits. Dalame give the rifle to one of the men and come with us to the office."

"Yes, Captain," Dalame said obediently.

In the full light, Lartal noticed that the negro, in spite of his calm manner, was much perturbed. His face was grayish, like old slate. His shoulders sagged. Instead of coming to the center of the room, he instinctively took up his usual place by the side of the door, back to the wall.

"Dalame," Lartal ordered, "tell me all about what thou hast done."

The negro spoke, shakily. His scant knowledge of French appeared to have been dispelled by an overwhelming emotion, and his words were not intelligible.

"*N'be menike Bamanan-ka!*"

Fontarge reminded him, sharply—

"I understand Bambara!"

Dalame went on in his native tongue, slowly. As he spoke, Fontarge translated, interrupting the negro occasionally to demand precision.

"This is about what he says: 'The captain asked me to help him go out before morning. He told me that the time he and I had waited for was at hand. Ever since I first covered myself with a *bila* (loincloth) I have done what the captain said for me to do. I have disobeyed the other captain, that is true. But who is he? A new white man. All white men are as little boys to the captain. After the lieutenant and the new captain went down-stairs, I went to the sentry under the window. He say for me to go away. And we fought. I knew that the captain did not wish for me to kill him, so we fought long. I held his neck with one of my hands. He could not talk loud. Then captain came down from window, and helped me. It was easy. The new men have big bellies and small arms. When the private was quiet, and out of the way, captain told me to take his gun and stay, so that the white sergeant with the patrol, when he next passed, would not know of what had happened. He went away and I stayed.' "

"Dost thou know, Dalame—" Lartal asked, "that should the captain die thy own death may come?"

"I croak soon," Dalame admitted.

He glanced down at the floor, grinning.

And Lartal, following his glance, saw that blood was dripping on the planking, that Dalame's baggy trousers were soaked with blood.

"Hurt? How much?"

"Belly. The sentry hit."

Fontarge hurried out of the room, returning soon with a mattress. He urged Dalame to lie down, and examined the wound.

"The bowels are pierced," he said. "Dalame, do you want anything?"

"Water. Thirsty."

"Don't give it to him," Lartal urged. "It will make his wound fatal. Perhaps, we can—"

"Without a surgeon?" Fontarge poured the water in a large glass. "Here, Dalame, drink."

Lartal sat astride a chair, looking down at the black. Fontarge, who had grown genuinely fond of the Bambara, squatted by the mattress, patting the wounded man's shoulder wordlessly, his eyes watering.

Martillac entered the room.

"You were a long time," Lartal chided. "Is Captain de Vallier gone?"

"He climbed over the wall, Captain. But if I delayed, it was to do my duty. From the noises outside, something is going on. I believe they'll attack before light."

Lartal nodded and rose.

"Fontarge, you stay here, until—until you are needed elsewhere. Dalame—" he broke off.

"I savvy," Dalame acknowledged. "I savvy, Captain!"

ALTHOUGH it was still dark when Lartal reached the terrace of the blockhouse, he had seen that the black troopers were all awake, walking toward their positions for action. Parneaux was standing beside the cannon.

"Do you think they'll risk it this time?" the sergeant asked.

"They may. Have you heard anything more?"

"Martillac heard. He has the ears and eyes of a cat. Maybe, you can hear, too."

Lartal stood silent, listening. It seemed to him that whispering could be heard, the strained breathing of men. Yet he wondered whether this were not a trick of the imagination. To distinguish by eye the mimosa bushes from motionless human forms was impossible. It did appear that one of the rows of shrubs was advancing, but here again his excitement might mislead him.

"Might try a shot," Parneaux suggested, when Lartal spoke to him of his suspicion. "They're kind of excitable folks, and would surely yell and shoot back."

"Better to wait daylight, Parneaux. The *Tirailleurs* and *Spahis* are at the loopholes, ready. You have your piece in good order, I suppose?"

"Shipshape, Captain," Parneaux said. He added, "Captain de Vallier and the lieutenant—where are they?"

"Lieutenant Fontarge will be at hand when the firing starts, if it does."

Parneaux spoke to his men in a whisper. Evidently, from the little overheard by Lartal, something of the events of the night had already leaked out among the blacks, and the sergeant found need to soothe them.

Then all was quiet. Martillac had abandoned the patrol of the yard. The sentries, now elbow to elbow with the rest of the little garrison, called out no longer.

Lartal had experienced this hush that preceded action at least a score of times in his life. But it held an ever new thrill for him. In the upper floor of the blockhouse, immediately below the gun, a stand of rifles was located. He hurried downstairs, returned with a Lebel, and a pocketful of cartridges. An added rifle would count in case of attack.

Fontarge joined him.

"Over?" Lartal asked.

"No. He'll live on for a few hours. But I may be needed here." He grasped Lartal's arm, "Say, do you feel them rustling in the dark, as I do?"

"Yes. Lucky we're not in the open, with the mob there is out there. I merely wonder whether we are deceived in thinking them so near. The wind may bring these faint sounds from their camps."

"Not likely. I wonder also—what happened to de Vallier."

"There's no doubt. Had I supposed otherwise, I'd have tried to overtake him, save him. I know the same thought occurred to you. But it would be foolish to sally out after him."

Lartal leaned over the edge of the terrace—

"Martillac?"

"Captain?"

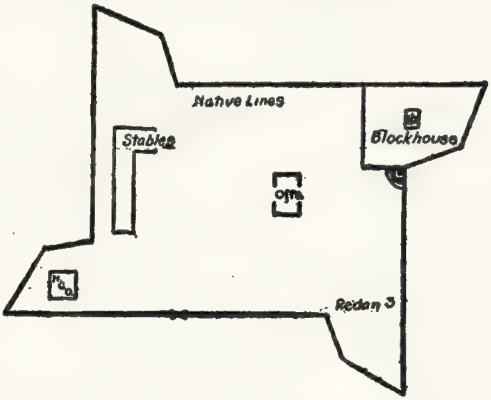
"Have the group in Redan Three fire—I believe, by ——, that something is moving there!"

He turned to Fontarge:

"Get down below in the yard. There's enough with one of us up here."

Fontarge vanished down the stairway just as the *Tirailleurs* opened fire.

A long howl answered, and a hundred rifles stabbed in brief flashes. A *Tirailleur* on the top of the wall thrust out a long stick, with a blazing wad at the end, and set fire to the combustible matters strung on wire before Redan Number Three.



Fifty yards away, a multicolored swarm milled, whipped by the bullets. The cries spread from man to man, until they resounded from all sides of the post. Lartal, elbow braced on the parapet, fired into the flank of a strong contingent racing toward Redan Three. Parneaux, armed with a cavalry carbine, was at his side.

"I'll wait until they break and run, then sprinkle them a bit," he announced.

The onslaught had been more noisy than dangerous, and soon the natives were ebbing back, at first in driblets, then in a body. But brief as the time occupied by the rush and retreat, the sun had risen before they were sheltered, almost without transition from night to day.

Moktar's cohorts, swelled by the Kel Antassars, occupied the outside water-holes. They had thrown up some sort of breastwork in the dark. It was the sound made by the laborers that Martillac had first heard. The attackers knew well from where the principal danger came, and bullets rained on the gun platform. Parneaux, however, did not appear disturbed. He was unhurried, precise, as always. The black arms of a negro would pass the shell to a man standing beside the gun, the arms emerging from the square, traplike opening leading to the terrace. The sergeant, leaving the riflemen to take care of the nearest assailants, dropped shrapnel on the groups of camels and men in the distance. Lartal mentally approved. If the Moors saw their mounts retreating, they would immediately discover that the vicinity of the Post was not to their taste.

"What do they hope to do?" Fontarge called up from below.

Lartal knew the answer, as soon as Fontarge has asked the question.

Fifty or sixty natives were approaching steadily, the gaps filled by new men rushing up from behind. They carried fifteen or more poles to which horizontal bars of wood had been fastened. They would place the rudimentary ladders at the foot of the walls, the butt end solidly sunk into the sand. Then men would climb to the top of the wall and drop on the defenders below.

"Fontarge—the lads with the ladders!" Lartal called out.

"Yes, Captain."

The well coached ladder-crews sought spots far from the loopholes. The erection of the ladders had no doubt been carefully rehearsed, for each man seemed to know just what to do and how to do it. The first rush had brought the poles very near. The black troopers could not prevent the carriers from crawling near, for the gaps were always filled with a persistence worthy of admiration. Lartal had known his foes to be brave, always, but he could not keep back an exclamation of mingled anger and appreciation.

"Fix bayonets," Fontarge ordered.

It was inevitable that a few of the poles would be lodged against the wall, and that a hand to hand struggle would follow. Lartal saw the families of the troopers filing toward the blockhouse. The women had already foreseen that the huts would not be safe in another fifteen minutes.

Lartal was aware that this anticipation of the order to retreat might tend to demoralize the defenders, yet he could not bring himself to interfere. The women's instinct might be right. He tried to think of some measure to stem the advance of the poles. A number of the privates had gained the crest of the wall, and were lying flat, waiting to knock down the ladders. Bullets were pitting the bricks near them.

* * *

ONE of the poles was at last in position, and men were hacking at the fingers of the *Tirailleurs*. With breath taking velocity, a half dozen Moors were on the walls, engaging the soldiers. One of them, a tall fellow, stripped to the waist, his long hair and beard scarcely darker than his tanned torso, stood erect, lifted his arms. For a fraction of a second, he held something round and dark aloft.

Lartal brought the sights of his rifle in line with his stomach, and, just as the native threw what he held upon the group of blue clad privates below, fired. The man fell to his hands and knees on the wall, squirmed, fell flat, and then rolled off to the ground outside the post. The bulk of the attackers rushed to the one pole that had been successfully placed. From the water-holes, from the dunes, others were racing, heedless of the fusillade.

A cry of rage, uttered by Fontarge, drew Lartal's attention into the yard. The soldiers were running back toward the blockhouse, and the lieutenant, arms wide, was attempting to halt them. Pushed aside by the privates, heavier and stronger than he, Lartal saw him level his revolver, hesitate, then press the trigger. But he would have been forced to drop all of the men, one after another, to stop them.

For Lartal to use the stairway would consume too much time. Risking a broken leg, he leaped from the terrace to the ground below. Half stunned, he staggered to his feet, then fell again, his ears tingling, thrust down as if by a strong wind. The next moment Fontarge was beside him, helping him to his feet.

A few yards away Martillac stood, with a lighted torch in his hands. He stooped, picked up a bottle from a basket and threw it toward the natives. Explosion followed explosion, as the sergeant, with the superhuman calm of supreme excitement handled the glass bombs, swiftly and skilfully.

Fontarge took advantage of the respite to gain control over his men, and led them forward with the bayonet, in one of those headlong charges for which the blacks are famed. The natives on the walls, who had seen their comrades mangled by the mysterious bursts of flame, plunged to the foot of the wall, communicating their fear to the others. Having come so near to success, only to fail, the warriors of Moktar were discouraged, and fled, pursued by the shells of the cannon.

Fontarge, his face streaming, begged Lartal to be permitted to ride out. But the captain refused—the risk was still too great.

"What happened to your men?" Lartal asked. "I saw you—"

"I remember very well what you saw," Fontarge admitted. "And I hope that I never again will have to do it."

He grasped a private by the arm—

"Thou! What was wrong with you boys before?"

"The captain—"

"What captain, fool?"

The negro pointed to a group of women and children gathered at the foot of the wall, where the attack had been broken by Martillac's bombardment.

The two white men worked their way through the naked backs, cuffing and pushing, for the blacks were too engrossed to heed words.

Fontarge saw first, and cursed. Lartal, glancing over the lieutenant's shoulder, shuddered.

"No wonder the men were frightened," he said.

"We can't leave it here," Fontarge said. "Here, one of you—"

Lartal interrupted him roughly.

"There's nothing to be squirmish about—" He tore a cloth from one of the women and bent down. "Is this the first time you have seen a head without a body?"

* * *

MOKTAR EL KHIANI had vanished northward.

A messenger from Timbuktu, who reached Bir Ella Ma without encountering the enemy, brought the report that the French had met with success farther east. The Tafilalet chieftain, who had boasted to de Vallier that he was kept informed of all that happened in the desert, had doubtless heard, and had feared to delay too long. Perhaps, also, the losses suffered in the single assault had disheartened him.

On the dunes, the third day following the attack, the blacks were still occupied digging long ditches for the dead. The walls were pitted with bullets, and blackened by the fires lighted during the night combat. When one walked outside, little round pellets of metal glistened where the shells had burst. Martillac, pencil in hand, counted the dead.

Fontarge, at the window of de Vallier's room, spoke musingly:

"Makes a difference, Lartal, whether one passes on after killing, or is compelled to remain on the spot. I don't like this. And—to tell the truth, the thought of the poor slob I dropped for running trots round and round in my head. He was not to blame. I'd have been startled myself."

"Drop brooding," Lartal advised. "It's like placing a finger between cog-wheels. Once started—"

He went on with his task. Tearing de Vallier's papers into bits to be burned later, selecting those that would be of interest to his family. In a drawer he had found de Vallier's cross of the Legion of Honor, and the blue and white ribboned Colonial Medal. These were to be sent to his son.

"Brooding—" Fontarge persisted. "How can I help brooding? We managed to find de Vallier's body, and he's laid away, all complete. But I can't say that I've forgotten—"

He turned his face away, and Lartal refrained from speaking. Although he had liked de Vallier, he had not been as close to him as Fontarge. But he had experienced a long moment of anguish.

The body, found in the camp abandoned by Moktar, was not mutilated in the atrocious fashion habitual with the natives. De Vallier had been slain at a blow, without preliminary torture. Probably not five minutes had elapsed between his arrival before El Khiani and the execution. After more than four hundred days of suspense, the end had come quickly.

"Lartal—I must talk!" Fontarge insisted. "It may be indecent to doubt de Vallier now. But, had he been out of his mind what happened to him would have happened to him, as long as he fell into their hands."

Lartal silently indicated the miniature they had discovered.

"That?" Fontarge exclaimed. "He may have kept it hidden from me, until he needed it as proof."

"At one and the same time you claim him a marvel of foresight—and mad, Fontarge."

"A demented man is surprizingly logical in his explanations. I wonder if I'll ever be sure. Lartal, you may not attach so much importance to it, but I, who knew him better—I'd give anything to know whether to remember him as a madman—or a martyr."

"We found the body fully dressed, didn't we? That was an unusual feature. Recall that before, in Moktar's absence, he had been deprived of his belt, buttons and small belongings, that his boots were coveted."

"That's what he wrote—"

"We know what the natives are like. Moktar must have forbidden his men to touch the corpse after death. Also, there were no bruises on de Vallier's arms. His hands were not even tied. Killed him on the spot. From the cut the blow was given when he was kneeling, allowing the wielder of the sword to swing freely. It needs the proper position combined with the proper skill to sever a head neatly. All points to a specialist, given the best chance —and upon an unmarked man whose hands were not tied."

"Yes," Fontarge said, nodding.

"The attack followed immediately upon the execution. The throwing of the heads among the blacks was premeditated. That is why Moktar had not summoned de Vallier before. For three weeks, he studied Bir Ella Ma, knew just where the distance between the walls and shelter was shortest, had found the weakest point for the ladders. Then only did he call for de Vallier, whose head was to be used to kill the morale of the blacks. Had it not been for Martillac, it might have succeeded. You and I did not shine particularly for presence of mind."

Fontarge smiled bitterly.

"The old gentleman was not above getting interest on the loan made to de Vallier of his head."

Lartal leaned over, and pulled the table aside. He picked up a paper and looked at it closely.

"Look at this—a thin parchment."

He reached for the miniature, placed it in the center.

"Now fold!"

"Yes, it was wrapped around the frame."

"There's something written on it—not in de Vallier's hand—"

"Arabic?"

"Arabic. 'What has been left undone will be done, please Allah.' "

Lartal rose, and gave a basket filled with torn papers to an orderly—

"Burn in the cook's place."

"That settled the matter," Fontarge acknowledged. "But I still believe de Vallier foolish to have gone. What will the governor say when he hears?"

"HE? HE'LL be relieved that he was not called upon to decide. If one can not break faith with native friends, even less can one break faith with a native foe. A single false oath by one of us would do us more harm than a thousand rifles. Yet how can a Frenchman allow another to go to his death? The governor could not have ordered de Vallier to remain, and would not have wished him to go. It was a matter to be handled by de Vallier himself. Don't pity him. It is not granted to all of us to die as well."

"No," Fontarge admitted. "He was right."

Lartal sealed the package he had been making, addressed it.

"This will go to Madame de Vallier," he said. "De Vallier paid for his son. Moktar knows the code. Blood calls blood. Up to us now to collect."

Fontarge stood framed by the open window. Lartal saw his strong lean profile against the light. The lips tightened. The lieutenant, his careless manner gone, appeared older, firmer.

"To collect—please Allah," Fontarge concluded.

AN ARIZONA ARISTOCRAT

by Alan Williams

THE McLellan family, today, is one of the richest and most powerful in Arizona. Individually and collectively, it can borrow any amount of money from the packing house banks; the McLellan Headquarters Ranch in the southern part of the State is the largest in Arizona. The McLellans are interested in mining and railroad development; they have citrus and cotton properties in the Salt River valley, and are even suspected of sheep in the northern part of the State. But that is probably a base canard.

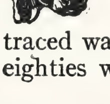
The McLellan name is traditional in Arizona, for already the new West is so old that it is beginning to have its landed class of old families. It will not do to look too closely into the history of these first families, but neither will it do to look too closely into the lineage of the First Families of Virginia, or of those who made the trip on the *Mayflower*. The only difference is that in the West men are still alive—old men now, it is true—who remember the beginnings of the families whose daughters are marrying into the sacred realms of Fifth Avenue and Beacon Hill and whose sons go to Harvard and Dartmouth.

The fate of the rustler in the early days was usually a necktie party—when he was caught; but many a cattle ranch was started on rustled stock. The history of some of the biggest mining companies begins with a jumped claim. The father of the man who is, today, one of the most influential bankers in the Southwest, founded the family of fortunes by handling the loot of road-agents. The McLellan family is not without its skeleton.

The pioneer of the family in Arizona was Major Archie McLellan, a real major of the Confederacy, who came West just after '65, and some time before the railroad reached Arizona. The skeleton is not the major's. He brought some little cash with him, and drifted from one thing to another until he was finally established in the cattle business. He was successful almost from the first, and for many years he was the czar of the cattle country south of Tucson to the Mexican Border and eastward almost to El Paso. The family influence continues just as powerful to this day, but it is exercised in a different way; it is a matter of notes and credits and leases, rather than the personal equation.

It was young Arch who brought disgrace upon the family in the early days, but all of that is quite forgotten. The major lies in Arlington these many years, and very few of his contemporaries are left—J. K. Brown, once sheriff; "Sport" Keegan, storekeeper; and, possibly, one or two others. But these few never mention the early derelictions of young Arch. These have been quite forgotten in the rehabilitation and present glory of the family.

But there was a time—



CATTLE were disappearing from every ranch in the country, which was not particularly strange, but that none of the cattle could be traced was strange. This was in the early eighties when cattle raising was becoming profitable, after having been looked upon with considerable scorn for many years. The railroads made shipping easy, and after several wet years, the range was excellent. The cattle-men began to stake the prospectors, and Indian fighting had developed into a sport. But lynching rustlers was even better sport and more justified. The country was known; rustlers were quickly suspected and executed—proof of their guilt generally followed, rather than preceded, their execution. The ranchmen knew three hundred miles of Border better than the average policeman knows his beat, and there was little respect for the International Border in those days. If cattle disappeared no wires were sent to Washington; the *vaqueros* rode straight on until the cattle were traced, for the mountains of Chihuahua and Sonora were the rustlers' haven.

But for almost a year the owners were completely baffled; cattle were disappearing without a trace. José Lopez was suspected; in fact, the cattlemen were convinced of his guilt, but the disposition of the stolen cattle was the greater mystery. There were many raids on the Lopez ranch in Sonora but never a stolen brand discovered. He had more calves and yearlings than he should but that was not proof. He was not shipping by rail. The Southern Pacific had not yet gone into Mexico, and from Tucson he was only shipping his own undisputed stock. Nor was he driving into El Paso or any New Mexican towns, and it seemed incredible for him to ship through Guaymas, on the Gulf of California, but even that possibility was investigated.

Finally, his cache was discovered. A remote cañon just below the Border revealed a fenced-in corral, but that only solved half of the mystery. The men who made that discovery were cautious. They merely satisfied themselves of the presence of stolen cattle from every ranch in the country, and set about to ferret out the main mystery. How was Lopez disposing of these stolen cattle? There was a missing link somewhere. The men who made the discovery of the secret corral were close-mouthed, and took no one into their confidence except Major McLellan. His advice, as they expected, was sound enough.

"Keep somebody watching day and night," he instructed. "It's shipping time now; even down there he won't be holding them in a corral after May."

There is no doubt that the major would have given exactly the same advice, even if he had suspected the truth. But the truth had not been suspected by any man in the country. The major's advice was taken and the stolen cattle—every head of it—were eventually brought into the major's corrals and the terrible truth was known. It seemed incredible and yet it was simple.

Young Arch had entire charge of shipping. For reasons of economy and efficiency, all the cattle from the valleys were shipped from the major's Headquarters Ranch. This meant a necessity for only one siding and one arrangement for trains with the railroad and packing houses, and resulted in the saving of considerable money for the shippers. No charge had ever been made by the major for the service, and, of course, he profited to the extent of a cheaper rate in shipping. And young Arch was boss of the operations.

He signed for the cattle brought in by the ranchmen, and paid them when the money was received from the packers. The whole thing was highly business-like and efficient, and it was a very simple matter for Arch to accept the stolen cattle from José Lopez and ship them on with the rest. There was no need of changing brands or practising any subterfuges after the cattle were in the McLellan corrals. The only danger was in driving the cattle from the hidden corrals in Mexico to the McLellan Headquarters Ranch, but that was the risk taken by José Lopez. The way bills and packing house receipts passed through the hands of young Arch, alone.

At first, even with the clear and unmistakable evidence, the few men who were conducting the investigation would not believe the truth. But then one of them recalled the many stories in Tucson about the great losses of young Arch over the tables in "Dago" Paul's place. As the oldest son of the major, it was presumed that young Arch had plenty of money, so the stories of those losses had not been particularly remarked upon. But now things began to appear in a different light. The men figured that the operations between Lopez and young Arch had, probably, been going on for about four years, and during those four years Dago Paul had been consistently bleeding McLellan, Jr.

But even with almost unmistakable proof, the men who made the discovery did not want to believe, and so they went to the major, for final proof could only be obtained from the office records. The major listened in silence. His color changed—one of the men more observant than the others noticed that—and his hands closed. That was all. Without a word, he went into the office and tried to find the records from previous years. Today there are stenographers and bookkeepers at the Headquarters Ranch, but in those days there was no clerical force; young Arch had entire charge.

The men had taken the precaution to have one of their number detain young Arch in the corrals while they talked to the major. It took the major about fifteen minutes to make his search. Not one of the necessary way bills and receipts could be found. He gave his instructions very quietly.

"Take your receipts as usual," he said, "and then three of you go into the Tucson yards. I'll arrange with the superintendent there for a lay-over long enough to re-check. That will settle it, and—if you are right, and you must be right—I don't have to tell you what to do—except this: Every man of you figure up what you've lost in the three or four years this has been going on, and give me your statements. If I can't pay now, I will as time goes on—"

Thus spoke the major, but the men shouted him down in unison. Not one would take a nickel from the major. They even tried to apologize for young Arch. They blamed it all on Dago Paul. But the major would not listen.

"Gambling is the poorest excuse of all. He's done the rottenest thing a man can do. If you'd told me he had held up the train or the stage, I wouldn't feel it so much. He'd be taking a chance then of being shot down, anyway. But to rustle cattle from men who trust him without question—that's plain yellow dog. It's the rottenest thing that's been done in the country, men—and it had to be my boy—"

"He's just a kid," one of the men offered rather weakly.

"Kid, ——!" the major snapped. "He's no kid. When the check is made in Tucson the thing is settled, *sabe.* The day before, you want to get Lopez and his men; have them all, right on the other side of the line. Then bring Arch along and swing him to the highest tree!"

"We can't do that, Major," the spokesman said, and every man of them nodded in confirmation.

"You've got to do it," the major shouted, "or I'll shoot him down with my own hands, and you wouldn't make me do that, boys. If we're going to raise cattle in this country, men, we can't do it and let rustlers live. We all know that. I told you last year you ought to have swung José Lopez just on suspicion. I'm glad now you didn't. Arch is worse than an ordinary rustler. He didn't even take the chance that rustlers have to take. After the check is made, and if you get the proof, never let me see him or hear his name mentioned again. And then we won't be bothered by rustlers or inside crooks for a few years, boys!"

It was a long speech for the major, and when he finished, he put a whisky bottle on the table, and strode out of the room. He stumbled as he reached the door, but straightened up immediately. The men who were left behind took large hookers of whisky in complete silence.

THERE was never any doubt that the check at Tucson would prove the guilt of young Arch. There was rustled stock from every ranch in the country; every brand was represented. The men figured that José Lopez and young Arch were cleaning up a gross of from eight to ten thousand dollars.

The day after the shipment and the check-up, a grim deputation rode into Headquarters Ranch. They found young Arch, slightly drunk, in the corrals. He would not leave the place until all the receipts had arrived from the packers. He greeted his neighbors cordially enough, and invited them to ride up to the house with him for a drink.

They declined.

"We want you to come with us, Arch," the spokesman said.

Arch looked up quickly. Every man facing him packed a gun. Arch, fooling around the corrals, did not even have his .45 with him. It was probably just as well.

"Where to?" he demanded.

"We've got a couple of rustlers across the line," the spokesman replied; "we want you to have a look at 'em."

Arch looked at his visitors again.

"All right," he said with a little laugh.

They went with him to saddle his horse. Not a word was said.

"I'd like to go to the house first," Arch said quietly as he swung into the saddle.

The men looked at one another.

"No use, Arch," the spokesman finally said.

"All right," young Arch agreed.

They reached the grove of cottonwoods just across the border. The bodies of José Lopez and his assistants swayed gently in the breeze. An empty noose awaited young Arch McLellan.

"Well, Arch," the spokesman said and his voice was harsh and unnatural; "the cattle you shipped were re-checked today at Tucson by your father's orders. You want to say anything?"

Arch had not dismounted.

"You're not going to—" He indicated the bodies of the swinging rustlers.

"We've got to, Arch," the spokesman said. "It's your father's orders. You know what that means—"

Young Arch slid from the saddle without a word.

"You needn't think I'm going to beg for mercy," he snapped.

"If you give me your word, Arch," the spokesman said, "that you'll step into the brush, there, and finish it another way, I'll give you my gat. We ain't hankering to hang you none." He turned to the men around him. "Right, men?"

"Right!" a few agreed. The others nodded silently.

"You'll still take my word," young Arch sneered.

"Yes, Arch," the spokesman replied.

"Well, I won't give it," he snapped. "Why should I spare you? Hang me, you ——, and not one of you'll forget it to your dying day. Shoot myself, huh! To save the conscience of you ——! I'll be —— if I will!"

He stepped firmly over to the tree. The noose was dropped over his head. He eyed them firmly, contemptuously.

"You're doing this because the major told you to, eh? And it's going to be easy for you to face him after this, isn't it? He won't say a word. He'll admit you did the right thing, but not one of you will look him in the eye."

They did not try to stop him. They listened, completely hypnotized by his abuse. It was not exactly the attitude they had expected.

"How many of you," he taunted, "would have had a head of cattle to steal if it hadn't been for my father? You, Bob Akin! Who hid you from the sheriff for sixty days and gave you a job? You, Mike Walker! Who paid the Texas marshal and started you going again?"

"You're worse than Lopez," one of the men argued. "How can we do anything with these Mexicans if we're double-crossed from the inside—"

"You'd have gotten your money some day," young Arch said, but still there was no pleading note in his voice. "I've got a record of every head that belongs to you. I've just had a rotten run of luck, but some day it would turn. And suppose I never could pay you back. Every one of you —— is riding pretty, and how many of you had a suit of underwear when you came into this country? You're yellow! And you'd like me to shoot myself! Like ——, I will. Let 'er go; it makes me tired to talk to you!"

They swung him up almost tenderly, but at a sign from the leader they quickly let him down again.

"We can't do this, boys!" the spokesman announced, and a murmur of relief went through the crowd. The major was their king, and for years they had worshipped young Arch as the heir apparent. He represented everything they admired. He could outride them, outshoot them, and even now he was outwitting them. He, as well as the major, had helped them, and befriended them on many occasions.

"Take your horse," the spokesman said, "and get into Tucson. Get the first train out, and never show up in Arizona again! We'll tell the major he'll never see hide nor hair of you again, and he can think what he likes. And he told us if we didn't swing you, he'd shoot you down himself. But we can't do it, can we, men?"

"No!" they agreed.

Young Arch walked out from the noose and swung into the saddle. He still sneered.

"Didn't have the guts, did you? Well, remember you're going to get your money some day; every nickel of it."

He galloped through the brush, waving his sombrero. Without a word, the ranchers rode away and gradually dispersed. The bodies of the rustlers awaited the buzzards. The next day the leader met the major going into the bank at Nogales.

The major, as always, walked stiffly erect.

He stopped his neighbor.

"Well?" he questioned.

The leader did not evade the major's eye.

"You'll never see him again," the leader said.

The major was not quite satisfied.

"They all got what they deserved?" he demanded.

The leader was rather skilful in evasiveness.

"They all got what they deserved," he replied firmly.

The major strode into the bank without another word.

LATE that same day young Arch rode slowly into Tucson. He had taken the seventy miles very easily; spent the night with friends in Tubac, and journeyed on the next day. Not a rumor had yet reached Tucson. The ranchers had worked with sealed lips. In Mexico, the news of the lynching of Lopez spread quickly, but it was almost a week before it was confirmed in Tucson.

Young Arch had his supper and several drinks in the Stag Saloon; then he had a few dances in the Shoo-Fly, and toward midnight wound up at his usual headquarters—Dago Paul's on Meyer Street. Everywhere he was greeted effusively. The bartender at the Stag bought drink for drink. The girls at the Shoo-Fly begged for dances, and did not care whether or no he bought beer; usually, they were more commercial. At Paul's he was welcomed most enthusiastically.

Young Arch did not play. He sat in Paul's private office, talking to Paul and Paul's lady friend. They had champagne as the evening progressed. Quite a party. The girl finally yawned and went away to her private quarters in the establishment. Paul and young Arch remained in the office. About four o'clock the tables began to shut down. One by one the dealers and the croupiers brought in their tin boxes weighted with gold and silver.

"Well, I guess that's the last one," Paul finally observed. "We'll have a bite to eat, huh, Arch?"

Arch had quietly locked the door, and when Paul turned he looked into two blue barrels.

"I'm making a little loan, Paul," Arch explained. "You've taken about fifty thousand from me in four years; now I have to take a little back. The boys ran me out today, and I need a little capital to start somewhere else. No use trying to get on without it; I'd just be a *vaquero* for years."

He quickly gathered up the necessary capital, efficiently bound and gagged the gambler, and strolled out. No one dreamed of stopping him. Everything had been timed. He caught a passenger train going west; dropped off a few stations beyond, and doubled back into El Paso on a freight. As a matter of fact, very little effort was made to get him. The sheriff was most unsympathetic. It was well known that Dago Paul had taken the boy for a complete cleaning. The usual circulars were distributed, but the sheriff of Pima County wrote a special confidential letter to his friend Jeff Milton, Chief of Police in El Paso, and the beard and mustache which young Arch raised were quite unnecessary.

News of the exploit quickly reached the ranches, and for a while the men tried to avoid the major. But he never gave a sign that he had heard. No one knew the thoughts in the head, carried so proudly erect. All that is known is that he never consented to see his son or have any communication with him.

With his capital Arch went into Oklahoma, and in two years had paid for every head of the rustled cattle. He made good in everything he touched—cattle, real estate, and, finally, oil. When gambling was abolished, and Dago Paul was broke, he got the borrowed capital back with plenty of interest.

All this was told to the major, but he died, unrelenting. His will completely ignored his oldest son. The valuable properties were left to the younger children and the grandchildren. But many of them were quite willing to sell out to Arch at the very fancy prices he offered them. They were not the least interested in the old story except as a tradition. They much preferred California and Paris to the Arizona ranges.

And so Arch became the head of the family, and who knows but that the old major foresaw just that outcome? Young Arch outranked his father; he was a colonel in the Spanish-American War, and his sons won their captaincies, majorities, and colonelcies in the World conflict. Early this year the seventieth birthday of young Arch, the patriarch, was celebrated with almost international participation. The McLellans came from the four corners of the earth. One of them is an English countess; another a French marquise. The men are merchants, bankers, scientists, and executives; the very youngest generation boasts of and apologizes for—as the case may be—a poet!

But they all venerate Colonel Arch McLellan—young Arch—as the head of the family; the standard bearer of great traditions! And among the crowd which gathered for the great celebration—there was a barbecue, of course—there was not a single survivor of the party in the cottonwood grove. Every man of them had died, or gone into parts. The few contemporaries who remain have almost forgotten the story; few of the youngsters ever heard it, and then only in garbled versions.

"You may talk about a free and easy country," Mrs. Horace McLellan observed—she was from New England and had married into the family; "but where could you find a more perfect aristocrat than old Colonel Arch McLellan?"

And the perfect aristocrat is discussing political issues with some of the men.

"No, sir!" he says emphatically. "I certainly do not believe in the abolition of capital punishment! Where would this State have been without capital punishment, and very summary it was on occasions, too—"

OBSERVATIONS

by Bill Adams

I

AMONGST a million other things last week I rode with a tramp with a grand opera voice.

We rode for miles and miles side by side.

"Tell me a pome, Bill," said he.

I made him a pome.

"Sing me a song, Dicky," said I, and he sang me very sweetly, an old, old song.

We parted in the midst of a great city, when the lights were all aflame.

"Sing Bill," said he, calling from the sidewalk.

"Sing, Dicky," I called back to him.

II

I WANT to go to the catfish hole with my pipe. Isn't it hard to have a kid's heart and a kid's delights in the old boyhood things and to have to sidetrack them to try to live a man's life? What's a man's life? Isn't it just trying to persuade all other men to quit being too cussed serious and to stay kids a while longer? I dunno.

Anyway, I want to go to the catfish hole. I don't want to work.

III

I'M DOG-WEARY, tuckered all out. Yet it is only my body that is tired. Man is a fiery spirit enwrapped with mortal flesh, isn't he? The spirit able to burn and bear the shrinking body on long after every limb is aching? I must go out to the open air and dig in some fresh earth. I've been all morning working. Now I must play.

IV

THERE'S something in me that forbids me to sleep when the moon is shining down upon a still and summer world. I lie and stare into the bright white light, and feel past ages echoing in my being.

We know what lies behind us—but who knows what lies ahead? I do not think that after the grave there is anything—and yet I do—for I have had actual evidence of the communication of the living with the dead.

I do not know—anything. But we'll hope!

Where are the hosts whom Tamarlane massacred? Where are all the million million gone? Do we lose our individuality in a composite whole? Or are we fragments of a whole that will some day reunite?

Sufficient for the day—

CYCLOPS

by Captain Dingle

Author of "The Knell of the Horn," "Out of the Fog," etc.

THE toughest of sailormen had a good word for the sky pilot of Sailortown. "Holy Joe" they called him. The name fitted him like his hat, for he was the human embodiment of kindliness and peace on earth. If a sailor got drunk, it was Holy Joe who protected him from the land sharks. Surprizingly, the sharks rarely resented the protection. If a bully got uproarious, challenging all hands to fight, threatening to clean up the place, it was Holy Joe who handled him; and only one bully had ever contested the sky pilot's intervention. On that occasion Holy Joe acquired a bloodied nose, but the bully had to be helped to his ship by his very much sobered shipmates. The waterside called the sky pilot the Fighting Parson for awhile; but the name fitted him not nearly so well as his affectionate nickname, and he became Holy Joe again.

His floating parishioners had almost forgotten that they ever thought of calling him the Fighting Parson when "Cyclone" Harrison happened into port. We of the schooner *Truant,* who saw that meeting, scarcely believed it, even though we saw it, for we knew Harrison's hard name, and well did we know Holy Joe. Harrison had a reputation. He was a man-killer and a woman despoiler. He had a laughing eye set in a handsome face, strong, even teeth, and a body full of the strength and wicked beauty of Satan's favorite son. He owned and sailed a smart topsail schooner in the Islands, and rumors were plenty concerning the sort of lady passengers he never seemed to sail without. That was not hard to understand. For all his reputation, Cyclone Harrison was a fine seaman, a bold man, and merry company ashore. He had saved more than one life at sea, he was not a cold, deliberate bully, but where a woman was concerned he was poison to other men.

So totally different from Holy Joe. That early evening when Harrison blew in, Joe had just succeeded in persuading a poor kid to go home. The kid matters little here; she doesn't affect the yarn; she had stepped out on the least flowery of all primrose paths—that of Sailortown—without realizing all it meant to a girl. Lucky for her, Holy Joe got to her before she had gone too far. He got her to promise to go right home and stay there, and the poor kid was opening the door of the dance hall when in came Cyclone.

"Well, well! If here isn't a pretty little pigeon all red-nosed from crying," Harrison boomed in his deep sea voice.

He seized the girl's skinny arm, and swung her around to examine her. All was fish that came to Cyclone's net, and sometimes, in his code, an unpromising bud might speedily blossom into a colorful flower with care and a little patience. It was surely foolish to pass any girl by without careful scrutiny.

But that first look was as far as he got. We all heard a choky cry burst from Holy Joe. It seemed to tear right up from his chest. The girl was struggling to get away, and Harrison laughing at her puny efforts. But he looked up at that cry, and the next moment the girl had vanished, while all hands stood in wonder at what followed swiftly. Harrison's eyes widened and he started to laugh, but the laugh died. Holy Joe—no man who was there will ever forget it—turned livid; there was no holiness in his face then. He walked toward Cyclone, with a bitter look in his eyes, and his hands outstretched with fingers murderously crooked.

"Hey, old fellow, back up!" uttered Harrison, himself taking a step in retreat. "I can explain—"

"To the ends of the earth!"

We heard Holy Joe mutter that; then there was a thud of flesh as they came together, and the room was full of fight. Nobody interfered. Nobody dared to. Even "Cardiff" Jones, the proprietor, who might have resented Holy Joe's sending the girl back home, was keen enough to see in this no common Sailortown brawl. He disliked Cyclone Harrison, too; and as long as there seemed to be a chance that Holy Joe would beat up his foe, Cardiff wished the parson well. And none of us doubted the issue. Holy Joe could handle himself.

There were no overturned tables or smashed chairs in that battle. No words were wasted. Harrison's handsome face grew hard and fierce when Holy Joe's hands fastened about his throat and began to squeeze. Cyclone punched shrewdly and tremendously at Joe's livid face and body. His blows left red marks on the visible skin, but otherwise seemed to be unnoticed. And Joe's grip tightened. Soon Harrison's eyes began to stare. Not one punch had the sky pilot delivered. Never once had his expression changed. His eyes glittered; his lips were pressed together in a thin, cruel crack; his knuckles shone white through the tightened skin; and his body and legs were as tense and rigid as if braced with steel wire. Harrison, heavier and bigger, was powerless.

We saw Cyclone's legs stagger; heard his breath; saw the big veins swell at temples and throat. Still Holy Joe's fingers dug deeper into the bruised flesh. Then Cyclone's eyes changed. Panic was there. And stark, physical terror. Nobody clearly saw how it all happened; but Cyclone stopped flailing his fists, swept a hand to his belt and swiftly upward, and Holy Joe staggered back with both hands clapped to his face, blood running through his fingers. All hands rushed to catch him, for he reeled backward as if falling. The door was flung open, Cyclone Harrison plunged out to the wharfside, and when Holy Joe took his hands away we saw a wicked knife cut across his face that had shut one eye forever.

Holy Joe started for the door, tottering, but suddenly he leaned against the bar and began to weep. It was creepy. Holy Joe, the kind, peaceful, big brother sort of fellow, weeping because he could not go out and get his man. But it seems we were a bit adrift even at that.

"God forgive me for my evil anger," Holy Joe sobbed. "God forgive me!"

THAT was the real beginning. Cyclone Harrison vanished. His topsail schooner got her anchor and flew to sea on the wings of a rousing breeze half an hour after Holy Joe's collapse; and the port saw her no more. We of the *Truant* finished our lading, and prepared for sea. The famous scrap was just another memory; a new yarn to be spun in the dog watches. Then down came Holy Joe to see the skipper, wearing seagoing duds and a sober sort of a half smile.

"Want to go to sea in my forecastle?" Captain Tubbs exclaimed when the parson accosted him. "Ain't lost yer license as a sky pilot, have you?"

"No, Captain. Not lost my license, but lost my right to preach the Prince of Peace to my fellow men. I want to go away and forget the place where I so far forgot myself as to nurse murder in my heart. I'll do a man's work in your ship."

So Holy Joe came along in the *Truant*, and a quieter, better shipmate a man never wished for. His face had healed, leaving a red, ragged scar from chin to temple; crossing both lips so that he looked doubly harelipped; leaving the empty eye socket like a gruesome bead on a crimson string. He lost none of his gentleness. Some men might have taken advantage of his altered situation to treat him with too great familiarity. The *Truant's* crew never did. They had seen him as a sky pilot; they accepted him as a shipmate, and he was as good a sailorman as any when he had been a month on board.

Trading down the Islands the schooner life was lazy and easy. The weather was warm, the breezes steady and mild, the sea sparkled under a glowing blue sky that had only the tufted white feathers of fine weather to relieve it of perhaps too great a perfection. Holy Joe retained his nickname for a long time. There had been some thought of calling him something a bit more sailorly, less saintly, since he was a sailor, but old Early Bird, the black cook, spoiled that. Joe often helped the cook peel potatoes in his leisure moments. One calm, mellow evening under the stars they both sat on a spare spar in the waterways abreast of the galley, peeling spuds for the morning hash. There was a man at the wheel, and one on the lookout. The watch below spun yarns on the hatch; the mate, off watch, played a flute very badly in his cabin; while the skipper kept the deck over his head and thought the music grand.

"Misto Joe," grinned old Early Bird, "do yo' reckon yo' gwine find dat Cyclone Ha'son some day?"

"I'll not seek him," Joe replied gently. "I am ashamed."

"Golly. 'Shamed, is yo'? Ef a man done cut me wid a razor I'd foller him to de end o' de earth, ontil—"

"Hush, Early Bird. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay."

"I never heerd o' de Lawd cuttin' nobody's eye out yit, but I seen plenty o' men cut critters as believed in Him," grumbled the old darky. " 'Tain't no use waitin' fo' de Lawd to—"

"I hope he won't," said Joe. "Harrison was desperate when he used his knife. I'm glad he did. If he had not stabbed me I would have murder on my soul at this moment. Please don't talk about it. Sing me one of your old darky songs instead, like a good fellow."

Old Early Bird did.

"O de worl' was built in six days an' finish on de seben;
Ah, he, ah, ho! are yo' most done?
But 'cordin' to de contrack it oughter been de 'leben;
So clar de track, let de bulgine run.
Now Adam was de fust man an' Eve was de odder,
Ah, he, ah, ho! are yo' most done?
And Cain was de fust bo'n an' Abel was he brudder;
So clar de track, let de bulgine run.
Oh, way down in de Garden whar de apple hang low;
Ah, he, ah, ho! are yo' most done?
Ol' Debbil pull de lady's leg an' Adam had to go;
So clar de track, let de bulgine run!"

When Early Bird told what Holy Joe had said about revenge, the crowd knew that only one name fitted such a man.

That was all right with us. It was all right for a long time. But one day ashore in a sizzling coast town, a boozy remittance man shouted out on Joe's appearance with the crowd—

"Hello, Cyclops!" and somebody laughed. The name stuck somehow. Holy Joe didn't seem to mind. He laughed quietly when the name was first flung at him. But from that moment there was a change in Joe. Subtle it was, and slow; but it was a change that was no more to be ignored than his facial change had been after that tremendous fight.

First thing we noticed was that Cyclops very soon stopped saying his prayers o' nights. Holy Joe had never turned in without kneeling at his bunkside. Cyclops knelt once or twice after a thoughtless booze hound slung that name at him; but not any more. Old Early Bird set great store by those prayers. He used to stand with bowed head, his great thick lips moving silently, while Holy Joe knelt in prayer. But Early Bird was to see the change as all of us had seen it.

There was the day of the hurricane down among the reefs. The *Truant* had run like a stage before the howling gale all day, and toward nightfall white water was seen dead ahead. That was the breaking of a devilish egg of trouble. The vessel was under a reefed foresail, and keeping well ahead of the murderous seas under it.

"Close-reef the mains'l and set it! And give her the storm fore-stays'l," the Old Man roared.

It was terrific work. Canvas possessed of seven devils to the fathom fought us and tore the nails from our fingers. Booms took charge of the tackles and threatened to brain us or crush in whole racks of ribs before they could be secured again. And the ship could not be brought on a wind until the mainsail was reefed and set. That white water was no longer to be seen, for the night had come; but the roar of the reefs could be heard, and it was ahead.

"Pahson, won't yo' pray a mossel?" old Early Bird pleaded, lending a powerful hand but almost pale with fright. Cyclops tugging at a reef knot uttered an unpleasant laugh.

"Tie knots, and leave the praying to somebody who'll be heard," he retorted, and even in the uproar of the storm we heard his teeth clash together.

We got the old barky hauled on a wind, and through the night thrashed her to windward, with that line of grinning Death waiting for us to leeward. Got her clear, too. But it was old Early Bird who prayed through it all. Cyclops only smiled; a bitter, contemptuous smile shivery to behold, when the darky proudly claimed credit.

THE skipper and the mate saw the change in the ex-parson. Both had known him ashore; they knew of the good he had done. They had heard of the fight with Harrison. Of course they had heard of the remittance man's slinging Cyclops at Holy Joe's head.

"Queer about him," the skipper remarked one morning when Nu Island crept up over a pearly horizon. "He was a saint until Cyclone Harrison crossed his bows. Turned devil for ten minutes and 'most killed Cyclone. Then turned penitent and come to sea for his sins, and now look at him change again."

"That Cyclops name did it," the mate rejoined sagely.

The mate, besides playing bad music on the flute, read bad fiction of the detective type, the very worst of it, and prided himself upon his acumen derived therefrom.

"Maybe there's some connection between the words, Cyclone, Cyclops."

"Maybe if you was to heave them rubbishly magazines over the side, and read yer Epitome, you might sail master some day instead o' stayin' mate and kiddin' yourself on your smartness. Get for'ard and see the anchor clear for bringin' up," the Old Man grunted.

The mate's penchant for thinking up mysteries that were not mysteries had long been a sore point in the cabin. The Old Man was shrewd. He could see, as anybody but a wilfully blind man might see, that something tremendously greater than any similarity of words underlay the change in Holy Joe.

From the moment of anchoring in Nu, things happened swiftly. Cyclops never started to drink; nor did he curse; he treated all women with such deadly reverence as precluded any meddling with them except to help out some poor derelict who had given her best and had begun to drift downstream to the sordid end awaiting such as she. He always found a way to lend a hand, or speak a word of comfort to a woman, no matter how far she had drifted. The greater the drift, the greater his tenderness it seemed.

So it was not drinking, nor swearing, nor women; but outside of those things Cyclops plunged headlong into the blackest whirl of the waterside and beach dens. He would go along with the crowd, and sit for hours at a drinking bout, drinking water himself and paying his shot like a man. He went on a dance floor too, though he never danced. But in either case he could be seen earnestly listening to the chatter about him; that terrible scar on his face all alive, a fiery gleam in his solitary eye.

Sometimes he seemed to be seeking trouble, for he would butt in upon a party of strangers, saying nothing, listening with obvious curiosity. Moreover, he never avoided any trouble that his shipmates might get into. It was rarely that the *Truant's* crew got into a fuss; but when they did, and a fight developed, Cyclops took his hand with us, and it was not long before he was as well known in the Islands as he had been at home.

But all this time he was growing more taciturn and grim. We left Nu, and ran down to the eastward seeking cargoes. From island to tiny island we dawdled, eating the Old Man's profitless bread; and wherever we anchored Cyclops went ashore, coming back always a little less companionable than he went. And yet, when a man fell from aloft one day, Cyclops tended him as gently as a mother, never leaving him until he died smiling for all his shattered body. Cyclops refused to read the service, though, when we buried him in the blue sea.

Then we ran into Apia and the Old Man heard of a cargo. Cyclops had gone ashore as usual. Once the skipper had hesitated about giving him leave every time the mudhook was down; but Cyclops only bowed and said he'd quit the ship, and he got leave, for our Old Man liked him and wanted to keep him. He was absent when news of that cargo came. In the light of later events it would have been interesting to watch him if he had been within earshot when the Old Man bluntly refused to take it. It was a load of stores and medicines, to go down to Raai, where the entire population was down with a hideous plague, and there was only a lone white trader there, alone in that ghastly mess.

Cyclops returned and for the first time in months he looked happy. It was a grim sort of happiness, perhaps, but anyhow he was not sour on the world. He glanced aft as he climbed over the rail, but there was nobody in sight. He noticed that the hatches were not removed.

"Cargo coming off today?" he asked, seeing all hands loafing in the forecastle. Nobody getting ready to go ashore.

"Ain't no cargo. We're pulling out right away," somebody told him without interest.

"What?" Cyclops snapped, and it was as as if a steel trap had been sprung upon a bar of iron.

The next minute he was going aft a fathom at a stride. He ran into the Old Man at the cabin slide, and we crowded through the forecastle hatch to stare. There was no great distance between forward and aft in the *Truant*. We heard every word.

"But, Captain, you can not refuse to go to Raai!" cried Cyclops jerkily.

He was turned 'thwartships, so that the great scar blazed at us. It was writhing. The Old Man looked uncomfortable.

"I ain't going to take my vessel into that pest hole for nobody," he retorted, and did not seem to resent being criticized by a foremast hand. He appeared a bit shamefaced.

"You must go," Cyclops cried. "There's no other vessel going down. I have to see—"

"Parson," said the skipper, reverting, perhaps unconsciously, to Holy Joe's old title, "you ain't no sorrier than I am about them poor niggers, but my own men come first. I won't run them into no such deathtrap—"

Cyclops acted as if he had not heard a word. His burning eye never left the skipper's red face.

"How much money is due to me in wages?" he asked. We did not hear how much, but:

"Sell me that smallest boat for my wages, and set me adrift in it with what medicines and stores it will hold near to Raai," said Cyclops.

We heard the Old Man grunt. Then his face turned redder and he answered Cyclops, who came forward stepping on the balls of his toes as if he trod on air. He had nothing to say to us; but pretty soon the mate hollered to take off the hatches, and the Old Man went ashore for the cargo, so we figured that Cyclops had shamed him into doing the Samaritan act for the natives of Raai. The cargo was not big. It was under hatches by night, and it was up anchor, make sail, and get out so fast all hands got excited over the errand of mercy. It was the helmsman who steered the first trick, who brought the real news forward when he was relieved. Cyclops relieved him.

"The mate give the Old Man the tally of the cargo, and the Old Man sez, 'All right, Mister,' and then the mate sez, 'See who it's consigned to?' and the Old Man sez 'No, who?' and the mate sez, 'It's consigned to Jack Harrison, that's Cyclone Harrison,' and the Old Man sez, 'The —— you say!' "

SOMETIMES there comes a spell of portentous calm before a storm, so oppressive that men are silent in their uneasy expectancy. Something like that settled over the *Truant*. There was something ominous in the very air. Here all hands had been saying that Holy Joe was going to sacrifice himself for a lot of sick islanders, even to the extent of giving up all his wages to do it; when the truth was he only wanted to set his foot on Raai beach because he had heard that Cyclone Harrison was hiding there.

Nobody spoke to Cyclops about his errand. All hands watched him furtively as he went about his work. The Old Man stared after him all the time, in a kind of awe. The mate looked as if he wanted to ask Cyclops about it once or twice, but thought better of it. So did we. No man could look closely into that mutilated face and dare to ask the question. The worst of it was, the weather was too fine. Sunny days, all gold and blue, with flying fish darting like silver spears from the heaving, unbroken swells, with just enough of a mild breeze to put the sails to sleep and keep the old *Truant* slipping along, persisted for a week; and every new day saw a change in Cyclops. Little tufted wisps of distant palms feathered the horizon day after day; the rich smell of warm loam earth came down on the light breeze and everything was as peaceful and beautiful as God had made it. Yet Cyclops ranged the deck like a tethered wolf, scarcely sleeping, spending spare hours of daylight fussing with the boat he had bought.

Then Raai lifted its palms against a rosy dawn, and Cyclops dropped his impatience as he might drop an old coat. His face paled, and his lips drew thinly together; but as he stood beside the boat, heedless of all orders, a faint smile flitted over his mutilated features and finally settled at the corners of his mouth. There was no pleasure in his solitary eye.

As soon as the schooner doubled the end of the island, the Old Man hove her to. He would not take chances by anchoring, for every yard of beach and bush which was visible from the deck looked forbidding and repellent, as if some horrible thing lurked there. No life appeared. Even the birds had fled. Canoes were drawn up at the fringe of the bush, and looked as if they had been there for months. It was plain to see that the skipper hated to get in touch with that island. The place had an air of disaster. There was no rich, earthy smell coming off; but, fancy or not, the place reeked. Nobody except Cyclops felt easy. He stood by his boat, with a hand on the gunwale, licking his thin lips with relish. The skipper scanned the place through a whaleman's telescope; soon he shut the powerful glass and swore.

"Nobody alive there! By Jupiter, I won't let that boat go. It's likely full o' putrid dead men. Fill away yer headsails, Mister."

Cyclops heard that, and in a couple of catlike steps was at the Old Man's side, his face working hideously.

"I'm going ashore here," he snapped. "If you refuse to send the boat with the medicines, I'll swim! I've sought this place long enough, and I've found it."

The man had foam at his lips. To us, who had known kindly Holy Joe, it was a fearful sight. And he went on in a fierce, staccato voice that grated on the ear and sent chills to the blood.

"Once before I have met John Harrison since he violated the trust I reposed in him. He fascinated and betrayed Lucy, my young sister, who took passage out to join me in his vessel. He escaped me when I met him once, but no more. He's here, and I'm here. He'll pay."

The Old Man stared as if mesmerized. All hands stared, crowding around the boat, and nobody moved to let draw the headsails. The cases of medicines had been placed in the boat, and hatches were off over the stores; but the boat sat there in the chocks. Desperate though the situation must be on the island, the appearance of the *Truant* had not induced a single human being to show himself. The Old Man noticed that. He glanced at Cyclops a bit uneasily, as if not quite sure about his sanity. It was not a nice problem for an easy-going old seaman to face. He had no doubt but that the entire population of the island had died. If Cyclone Harrison was still alive there must be murder done when that mad ex-sky pilot found him. The difficulty with the Old Man was that he couldn't be certain which of the two would be murdered, and he had a liking for our shipmate.

Cyclops solved the problem in his own way. One minute he was glaring at the skipper out of his one fiery eye, with flecks of froth at his chin; the next he had vaulted the rail into the blue sea and was beating the water into foam and leaving behind him a wake like a launch. A black triangular fin sliced the water in a semicircle alongside the swimmer; then darted away and disappeared, driven off by the tremendous commotion. Cyclops was half-way to the beach before the Old Man realized fully what had happened. Action followed fast then.

"Hoist out the boat!" he roared. "Heave them medicines in, and four hands stand by to go ashore!"

That boat traveled. We had her straightened out and foaming shoreward before the swimmer was out of the water. And we ran her up the sand, snatched up a case apiece, and were on the heels of the Old Man leading us while yet the bush could be heard swishing to the passage of our shipmate. We all believed now that he was mad. Of course, we had seen it coming on for months past. But that didn't fool our eagerness to be on the spot when the madman found his quarry.

"Step wide, lads," the Old Man shouted, bursting into a green glade. "Don't breathe, for God's sake."

The glade was littered with bodies, and they had been a long time dead. Some had been partly prepared for burial. There were a few mounds where burials had been completed. But there was no life. No sound. Even the surf on the outer reef had no voice to penetrate those grim shades. The Old Man bolted back toward us once, holding his nose, his eyes glaring wildly; but before he had a chance to turn us we heard beyond him a strangling sound like a cry half choked back, and we pushed forward to break from the bush into an open space around which was the village. And standing in the middle of the space was Cyclops, peering across at a corrugated iron bungalow in whose veranda a white man sat all slumped down on a stores box.

All along the veranda were mats, side by side, and on each mat lay a living man. Each mat was screened, roughly, but completely; fitful whimpers came from the sick natives, and thin arms moved. Before the bungalow was a neatly kept cane fence; it surrounded a bed of glorious flowers that seemed to sing in the sunlight. And out of the flowers rose a broad wooden cross. The thing leaped out at us amid the grim horrors of the plague-stricken place; for even the open space had its litter of dead.

WE HAD stopped. Cyclops started forward, and at the little fenced-in grave he stopped. Then a cry escaped his throat and rang through the glades, causing the white man on the veranda to sit upright in alarm. Then we saw that his hair was white as snow. But he was Cyclone Harrison all right, and he knew what Cyclops had come for. We saw him pick up an ax, and heard him laugh, a hopeless, resigned sort of laugh not good to hear. None of us had much love for Harrison, but we all wished he had not uttered that laugh, for it had despair in it. We pressed froward at the Old Man's heels, feeling somehow that we must stop this fateful encounter.

Then we all came to a halt. Cyclops was inside the cane fence. He had stepped over it, and was gazing intently at the face of the cross. Slowly he knelt, crushing the flowers, and his poor, scarred face was upturned to the blue sky. When he sank to his knees, we saw Harrison relax from his tense attitude, drop the ax and stagger weakly.

"Come, lads, let's lend a hand," muttered the Old Man, for Cyclops had got to his feet again and was turning toward the veranda.

We could not see his face, but he moved slowly, as if he gathered himself for the attack, and Harrison was in no sort of shape to fight for his life.

Cyclops stepped on to the veranda, and Harrison made no effort to defend himself. We could hear the whimpering cries of the sick, see the pitiful waving of skinny arms within the screens, but they meant nothing to us then. We saw our shipmate step up and lay a hand upon Cyclone Harrison's shoulder.

"Come, boys, let's stop it!" cried the Old Man. We rushed forward as Cyclops turned to face us, as if for the first time aware of our presence; and then we saw, not Cyclops, but Holy Joe again, gentle and pitying. It was as if in that brief moment he had knelt before the wooden cross among the flowers, he had shed the crust of hate that had marred his soul. Harrison tottered under his hand, with his white-haired head hanging. All about the veranda lay the poor facilities he had used for tending the sick. The few weak cries that were intelligible were all for him. Holy Joe was speaking.

"Harrison, one word. Does that cross bear the truth?"

Cyclone Harrison met our shipmate's burning gaze and nodded. So Holy Joe let fall his hand, and turned to us all tenderness and compassion.

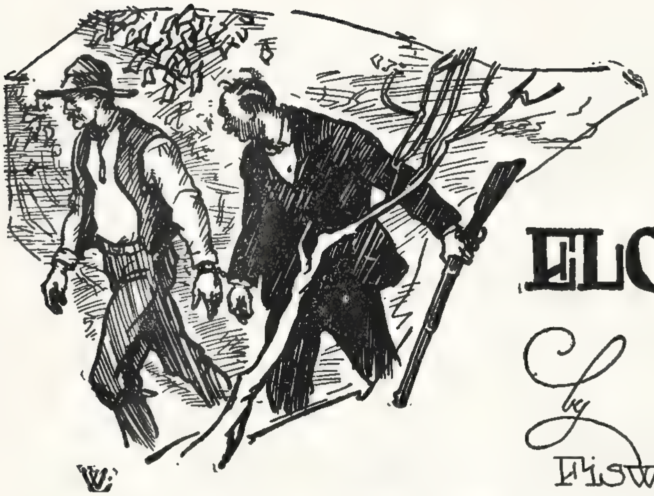
"Put down your loads, lads," he said gently. "Don't wait here. Captain, if you'll please land the rest of the stuff on the beach, I'll get it. We have work to do here, Harrison and I. You'll have to sail without me."

As if he belonged there, Holy Joe started right away to look at the sick, and Harrison staggered along with him, less like a cyclone than a healing breeze. The Old Man hesitated a moment, but he was no idealist, and soon we were heading back toward the beach at his heels. He stopped long enough to read the inscription on the cross at the head of the little grave:

"My Beloved Wife, Lucy Harrison,
Lies Here. R. I. P."

And all the way back to the *Truant* he was telling us what we had seen for ourselves, that Cyclops didn't want to kill.

Cyclone Harrison when he found that he had made the girl his wife. But to those of us who had known the sky pilot longest, the truth seemed rather that the moment spent kneeling before that wooden cross among the flowers, with grim death all about him, was the influence that again turned Cyclops into Holy Joe.



ELOQUENCE

by

Fiswoode Tarleton

Author of "Corn," "White," etc.

THE morning sun is baking Main Street in Leeston, and apathy is clutching the souls of men who sit in the shade of the porticos or stretch out under the elms of the picnic grove below the business-stores. Heat shimmers. Dust stirred by the pawing of a team of horses hitched in front of the drug-store hangs in the air in clouds. Flies drone in circles around the horses, and bite lazily. Men under the porticos and in the grove talk in whispers and gaze with steady eyes at the drug-store. Through the windows they can see three strangers lean over the wooden soda water fountain talking with Fallon the druggist. The strangers are speaking close to Fallon's ears and he is shaking his head. He keeps wiping the wooden counter with his cloth. His lips say nothing. When Fallon shakes his head some of the men under the porticos nudge each other. They can't hear what Fallon is saying no to, but they know. Men in the hill country feel the fetters of new laws. Federal men on the hunt for liquor can't efface their marks in the hill country; can't disguise their hardness of eyes; can't help strutting; can't be mistaken for drummers or their like. When the three Federal men got out of their spring wagon a few minutes ago the storekeepers and the men wandering into Leeston from the hills closed their mouths tight and forced stupidity on their faces. While the Federal men tied their horses in the sun men all along the street were pulling their hats down farther over their eyes and sitting down on the stoops or leaning against the buildings. They stopped where they were and prepared to watch.

Up Main Street, near Five Corners, the county jail and court-house almost hidden by the elms, is silent, too. From a lower window of the jail building, the window of the sheriff's office, a bearded face peers out. Jailer Saul Bankey's eyes are glued to the rear wheel of the wagon in front of the drug-store. One rear wheel is all he can see from the window, the rest of the wagon and the horses are cut off by the drug-store building. Jailer Bankey has to stoop, jack-knife his body to see the wheel. He has to put his eyes on the level of the sill to see under the drooping elm limb that shades the window; he is resting his chin in his fingers, his jaws move steadily and he spits over the sill.

When a scraping of feet comes to Jailer Bankey from the cells across the hall back of the sheriff's office he is unmindful. He hears but doesn't pay any attention. He doesn't even look around at the three gaunt prisoners who are getting restless and scrape their feet on the floor to get his attention. The prisoners are stooping now; they are looking through the office door, crowding close to the bars, trying to see what Jailer Bankey sees. But they can't. One by one they pace around the cell and in turn stop to peer through the bars again. The bars are hot. The air in the jail is sticky and doesn't move, but suddenly one of the prisoners sees the tip of an elm limb stir outside the sheriff's office window. The prisoner puts his face between the hot bars and calls to the jailer—

"Men gone yit?"

Jailer Bankey spits out the window and slowly turns his head. He shakes his head at the prisoners whose faces are close to the bars.

"Hain't gone yit."

"Hain't gone yit!" The three prisoners repeat to each other and pace the floor for a while. They wipe the sweat from their faces and brows and return their heavy felt hats to their heads. Their hands are deep in the pockets of their jean pants as they step around in the cell. A stray yellow-jacket drones around the cell, flying in and out between the bars.

"Men gone yit?" One of the prisoners calls to the jailer again.

Again the jailer spits and looks around.

"Hain't gone yit."

While his face is still turned to answer the prisoners one of them reaches an arm through the bars and beckons to the jailer. The prisoner makes a scooping motion with his arm.

"Hain't gone yit, Davey!" Saul Bankey says and looks out the window again.

Once more the three hill men begin walking around the cell. In long, springy steps they follow each other. When they have circled the cell a half dozen times Davey Wellcome pauses before the front bars again. He picks up a tin cup and beats on the bars with it. The other prisoners crowd close to him. When Jailer Bankey looks around they all make scooping motions with their arms through the bars. Looks like they all want water. The jailer rises. He doesn't straighten up his body but stoops as he backs out of the office; he keeps his eyes on the wheel of the spring wagon down the street as he backs. When he reaches the hall that separates the office from the cells he straightens up. In long quick strides he walks down to the end of the hall and out the back door to the pump. He pumps a bucketful and brings it back to the prisoners. He unlocks the door of the cell and sets the bucket inside.

THE prisoners don't pay any attention to the water. One of them holds to Jailer Bankey's shirt sleeves and tells him that they all want to go where there is more air. The Federal men hanging out in the drugstore can't see that they are out of the cell. They won't go outside until the Federal men go. They'll stay inside the court-house near a window where it's cooler. The spokesman for the three prisoners draws nods from the other two. They all nod and promise they won't go outside the building.

Jailer Bankey is shaking his head and trying to pull away. The Federal men might come back, he tells them. They might drop into the jail again if they drive past that way. If the Federal prohibition men find the Government's prisoners out of their cells having a good time, hunting the breezes and running around as they please, Leeston jail won't get any more moonshiners. The county will lose money. Federal men will take their prisoners out of the high country to a county where they never get out of the their cells until trial. The jailer stresses each reason with a shake of his head. He's firm but as he slips out of the clutch of the prisoner Davey Wellcome grabs his other sleeve.

"Ef yuh wait till the pro'bition men git out o' town," says the jailer, "I'll let yuh out. I hain't a-carin' then ef yuh go down the street." The jailer tries to pull away from Davey Wellcome.

"I'm a-thinkin' 'bout my two hogs, Saul," says Davey.

"'Bout what air yuh a-thinkin'?"

"'Bout my two hogs back home."

"Meanin' yuh got tuh kill 'em?"

"No, hain't got tuh kill 'em. Hain't hog-killin' time. Got tuh fotch 'em back tuh Leeston."

"Huh. What fer yuh got tuh do hit?"

"What fer? Hain't ol' man Carr a-goin' tuh take my case? An' he's got tuh git paid, hain't he? Got tuh have his'n. Got tuh sell my hogs. Lessen I sell my hogs I cain't pay ol' man Carr. Huh."

Scratching his head with his free hand the jailer gazes at the floor for a minute. When he looks up again the three prisoners are all attention. Their mouths are open and their faces are pushed tight against the hot bars of the cell.

"How long yuh reckon hit'll take tuh fotch 'em," says Saul Bankey.

Davey Wellcome pulls at his chin and gazes upward at the ceiling. His brows draw together. In his mind he is hustling over the hills seven miles to his place, not taking the trail but short cuts. Then in his mind he drives the hogs back. He is poking them on when they want to loiter and nose under the leaves and dead brush. It's hard to keep them going; driving hogs through wooded, brush-covered country is slow work. One hog's bad enough. But two!

Jailer Bankey is stooping, trying to see past the doorway and out the window but the view of the drug-store building is shut out.

"Gone yit?" One of the prisoners asks.

"Cain't see." The jailer straightens up and tries to pull away from Davey Wellcome but he is held fast. "How long yuh reckon hit's a-goin' tuh take yuh, Davey?"

"Hit's a-goin' tuh take 'till sundown ef I go now."

"Cain't go now. Cain't go 'till tha Gov'ment men pull out. An' hit looks like thar not a-goin'. Funny tuh me hill folks don' look sharper when thar a-makin' likker. Allus a-gettin' caught. Porky Ridge men allowin' strangers tuh nab 'em! Huh! Lowlander dudes a-goin' through the hills on their own hook, nabbin' yuh Porky men an' a-showin' up county officers, a-showin' up Sheriff Floyd. Yuh must been a-sleepin'."

Davey Wellcome and the other two prisoners hang their heads. They pull their hats down farther over their eyes. When Davey Wellcome speaks in a minute he doesn't lift his head.

"Hit war luck. Federal men stumbled on tuh us-uns. Federal men war a-tryin' tuh fin' thar way out o' tha gap. Didn't know at first we-uns war a-makin' likker. Still war not a-smokin'; we war a-fillin' jugs when one o' 'em called from Noah Rock, a-wantin' tuh know tha way out. One o' 'em suspicioned. Hit war luck!"

Jailer Saul Bankey gives a quick pull and frees his arm from Davey Wellcome's clutch.

"Cain't let yuh go 'till tha Gov'ment men pull out."

When the jailer starts for the sheriff's office one of the other prisoners hammers loudly on the bars of the cell with the tin cup. The jailer stops, turns his head around and frowns.

"Got tuh see tuh my craps, Saul. Got tuh look arter things afore night."

"Huh!" Jailer Bankey takes off his hat and scratches his head fiercely. He stamps his foot on the floor. "Hain't any more prisoners a-goin' home till Davey gits back. An' Davey hain't gone yit. Nobody's a-goin', till tha Federal men pull out. Hogs er no hogs, craps er no craps."

The jailer moves on to the office. He jack-knifes his body and rests his chin on the window sill.

"Men gone yit?" All the prisoners say it.

"Hain't gone yit!"

"Godamighty," says Davey Wellcome, and walks around the cell.

"Godamighty," the other two prisoners echo and pace after Davey. The yellow-jacket flies in the cell again and drones over the heads of the walking men. The air grows stickier. Sweat is on the faces of the prisoners in beads. Six times around the cell and all the men stop again, hold their faces against the bars and say together, "Men gone yit?"

Jailer Bankey doesn't answer but comes out of the office and continues on down the hall in long springy strides toward the front door and out. When he reaches the road he shades his eyes with his hand. The Government men's horses are making clouds of dust as they trot down Main Street away from Leeston. When the wagon is out of sight and the dust settles Jailer Bankey returns to the jail. The prisoners are clutching the bars; they are beckoning, making scooping motions with their arms through the bars for the jailer to hurry.

When the cell door is unlocked the prisoners push it open. In the hallway they stretch. Then they thrust their hands deep in the pockets of their jean pants and stalk toward the front door of the court house. They stop in the doorway and take off their hats. Their faces are brushed by a light breeze and their mouths grin.

"Yuh a-goin', Davey?" Jailer Bankey calls.

"Shore I'm a-goin'. Back when I said." Davey Wellcome launches his body out the door and cuts across the court-house yard to the board walk. He swings his legs in a long, steady gait down Main street, his head down. His body is set for the seven-mile tramp over the hills to the singing springs and Porky Ridge.

The other two prisoners follow him slowly down the street. One of them sits down on a bench in front of the restaurant. The other continues on down to the grove below the business stores, lies down in the shade of the elm trees and covers his eyes with his hat.

LEESTON is relaxing. Tension loosens. Men talk above whispers. Storekeepers sit on their stoops, fan themselves. Everybody is watching Davey Wellcome moving down the road. They see him leave the road below the grove and disappear through the scrub, heading in a beeline for Porky Ridge, deep in the hinterland. Warring Porky Ridge with its clan, century old and older. Porky, where the folks from the other hills seldom venture. Porky, where the women folks shoot as straight as the men. Porky, where moonshiners have never been caught before.

Davey Wellcome, one of the Porky Wellcomes, taken in tow by Government men, is giving Leeston something to ponder over. Business-store men, mountain men and town idlers are all discussing Davey Wellcome; they are conjecturing, trying to throw light on the miracle.

In the thick laurel Davey Wellcome doesn't slacken his speed; he breaks through brush and pushes aside saplings. Over gulleys and up steep hillsides, with his head down and fists tightened in the pockets of his jean pants he moves with the same steady gait. In his mind he is driving his two hogs back to Leeston. Sometimes they wander, separate, almost get lost in the thick brush. They want to go in every direction except toward Leeston. In his mind Davey keeps rounding them up. Slow work driving stubborn hogs that want to stop everywhere and root. Now he sees himself driving his hogs up Main Street in Leeston and driving them into Lawyer Carr's fenced-in yard. Sees himself in jail again before the sun goes down.

Now and then Davey, without slowing his steady mountain gait, looks up at the sun and then to his right and left but he keeps to a beeline. He starts his thinking over again, always about driving the hogs through the thick timber, up Main Street into Lawyer Carr's place. Over and over again he pictures himself in jail with some sunshine left.

Ascending a knob he pauses at the top and gazes around for a minute. He can make out the roof of the bank building in Leeston when he looks back. Ahead of him he can just make out Porky, veiled by a thin haze, like the back of a giant hog; bristling with laurel. Over on the other side of Porky Ridge is his cove and Singing Springs. Cold, sweet mountain water that makes the best whisky in the land.

Davey Wellcome moves on, lets himself down the other side of the knob. Avoiding the trail that skirts its base, he breaks his way through scrub again. His feet sink now in the soft marshy ground of the swamp that lies between the knob and Porky Ridge. His even, steady gait doesn't lessen a bit as he begins the climb of Porky. He is cutting off miles. Two miles farther if he had followed the trails, five more if he had followed the Leeston road around and doubled back. He is going home with the directness of a crow. He doesn't breathe any harder as he climbs. His wind is holding. Mountain men have heart and wind tuned to their legs.

When he reaches the top of Porky he halts for another minute, shades his eyes with his hands, looks around, and listens. Abruptly he starts down the slope off Porky. He is on the last lap. His cabin is directly below him in the cove, Wellcome Cove, where the springs sing night and day.

Half way down Porky Ridge a call jerks him to a halt under a laurel tree. A call just loud enough to reach his ears. Call that is aimed at him. Davey's ears catch its direction and his eyes squint through the thick foliage back of him. A gaunt mountain figure is ducking under the low-hanging branches and coming toward him. Mose Ricket, Davey's kinsman, shifts his eyes narrowly and steps silently as he approaches. His eyes are peering around and his finger is held up to his mouth for silence as he advances. When the two men are close together Mose Ricket holds a hand behind an ear and opens his mouth. The ridge is silent.

The two hillmen, a Ricket and a Wellcome, cousins, sons of an ancient lineage, look at each other. Davey's eyes are questioning.

"Broke out?" Mose Ricket whispers it.

Davey shakes his head at his kinsman.

"Hain't broke out. A-comin' tuh fotch my hogs. Fotchin' 'em tuh Leeston tuh sell." In a low whisper he says it close to Mose Ricket's ear.

Mose Ricket's brow wrinkles and his long forefinger picks at his whiskered chin. He peers around and, leaning up against a cucumber tree, sinks his hands deep in his pockets. Davey steps closer. There is something to be talked over before he continues on home. The two men stand silent for a spell. Birds fly up close and a woodchuck sits on his haunches not far away. Whispers as faint as the mountain breeze enter Davey Wellcome's ear as he moves his head still nearer his kinsman's. Whispered warnings about Government men being on the hunt for more stills around Porky. Government men sticking like glue to Porky and the Singing Springs country to make a clean-up since they stumbled by accident on Davey's still the night before. Federal men stumbling and breaking through brush like cows, helpless in the hinterland, watched by Porky men. The Wellcomes, Rickets, Collets, Sidsons shifting their stills always ahead of the noisy city men with shining badges. Whole short-winded Federal service must be working to clean up Porky. Porky men watching, every move unseen, knowing the law of chance.

With a glance at the sun through the tree-tops Davey nods at his kinsman and gets in motion again. His head isn't lowered now; his eyes are darting to the right and left. His stride is long as he continues on down the slope of Porky but every step is felt.

Just before Davey is out of sight through the timber Mose Ricket scratches his head, peers all around and steps out after his kinsman. He catches up to him at the edge of a small clearing. Together they walk swiftly to the cover of close-growing saplings. In single file they break through the thick brush and come out on the banks of the brook, the singing brook fed by Singing Springs. Through the narrow defile worn by floods they move on in silence. The springs are like music coming slowly to meet them. The tinkling water creates a spell. Davey Wellcome's ears tingle and his face flushes some. Twelve hours only away from the spell makes it seem more intense to him.

The faint grunt of hogs come to the two hill-men now. The grunts don't spoil the spell for Davey; they are other chords struck; the springs singing and the hogs grunting to welcome Davey.

Davey's hogs push their snouts through the paling, squeal and grunt as the two hill-men step out of the fringe of brush and scrub and enter Davey's cove. Chipping sparrows and chickadees fly up close. The two hill-men stop at the piggery and lean on the top rail of the fence and look around. The squeals and grunts of the hogs grow louder. When Mose Ricket's eyes glance upward and beyond the pig-sty to a narrow ledge shaded by magnolia trees he grabs his kinsman's arm. Mose Ricket doesn't speak; directs Davey's attention with his eyes. A man is sitting up on the ledge and stretching and yawning. The man's stretch and yawn are broken off sharply as his eyes spot the two hill-men leaning against the piggery. He turns and speaks, and three more men sit up and look down lazily. They are all rubbing their eyes now. Two of them lie down again and are shut off from the hill-men's view.

PULLING his hat down over his eyes, Davey opens the gate of the piggery and enters. He is out of sight now of the men on the ledge, hidden by the small corn crib, and is trying to run his two hogs out of the enclosure. When the hogs retreat to the fence near Mose Ricket he pokes them back with a stick. The hogs want to go every place except out the gate. When Mose Ricket climbs over the fence and helps Davey run them out the gate they race across the stub in Davey's Cove and they run back and forth along the edge of the thick laurel scrub until they come to a break near Davey's cabin and disappear through it. Davey Wellcome is coming out of the pig-sty now. He doesn't hurry as he walks across the stub in the cover in view of the two men sitting up on the ledge. His head is down; he is striking the stub idly with a stick and stepping directly toward the break in the scrub.

Mose Ricket is leaning idly against the piggery fence. One of the two men sitting up on the ledge lies down again, disappears from view. And Davey is almost at the break in the scrub. But the man sitting up on the ledge bellows a sharp command; harsh "halt" brings Davey to a sudden stop and the other three men jump to their feet on the ledge. Four carbines are covering Davey. He doesn't move anything but his right arm; he still strikes idly at the stub. His kinsman doesn't move, still leans against the piggery fence. Faint grunts come from the hogs in the heavy timber.

Two of the men on the ledge climb down while the other two cover Davey.

"By——! By ——!"

The men who climb down from the ledge now cover Davey and start toward him across the stub. The two others on the ledge climb down. One of them, a big man, puffs from the exertion; the fat on his neck ripples. The other three men are looking at him; their arms are sagging some from the weight of their rifles.

"By ——! By ——!" the big man says at last.

"What do you know about this, chief?" one of the other men says, lowering his rifle.

The big man shakes his head and mops his face.

"By——! By——!" He throws his head back when he exclaims this like he is going to sing a song.

Another rifle is lowered. Only one carbine covering Davey now. The man who holds it frowns slightly. He is thin but his head is large. The thick lenses in his spectacles blur his eyes.

"Extraordinary!" he exclaims. "But am I to hold this gun up all day?"

"Oh, put her down. Nobody's telling you to hold it." The man they call chief pulls Davey over near and handcuffs him.

Neither Davey nor his kinsman, Mose Ricket, seem to be conscious of what is going on. Ricket is picking a splinter off the piggery fence with his thumbnail and Davey squints upward at the sun.

"What are we standing in the sun for, anyway?" says one of the men.

The chief looks about him and his eyes fasten on the shadow thrown by a hickory tree that grows close to Davey's cabin. He pushes Davey ahead of him to the shadow, the other men following. All the men but Davey squat on the ground. Mose Ricket still leans against the fence. The hogs can't be heard any more from the timber.

"Broke out already, eh?" The chief looks up at Davey. "He couldn't have been in jail twelve hours before he broke out. Must have great jails around here! By ——! By ——! if he didn't get back here before our men who took him to the lockup."

"Maybe he didn't even get to jail. Maybe he got away from our men before they got to town." The man with the big student's head says it.

"Bet that's just what happened," one of the other men says.

The man they call chief strikes his knee with his fist.

"Professor, once and a while you've got an idea. Now if this here billy got away from our men before they got to this town of Leeston the other two prisoners got away, too. Maybe our men are shot up and lying along the road somewheres."

"Bet that's why they don't show up," says another man.

"By ——! Say, how'd you get away?"

Davey Wellcome is looking over the heads of the officers. Their talk is a jumble to him.

He is only mindful of the steady traveling of the sun down the sky. The shadow thrown by his cabin is creeping devouring the sunlight on the stub.

Porky man caught twice. Caught by chance. Federal men waiting on the ledge for the three who took him to Leeston. Federal men dozing on the ledge, half asleep, caught him. He and his kinsman were awake. What was the matter that he was nabbed like a childer?

Porky folks in disgrace. Dismal Mountain folk, Cone Mountain folk, folk from the little ridge across the valley talking about nothing else but the way a Porky man was caught twice.

"How'd you get away?"

How did he get away? He got away on a promise. He ought to be scheming; ought to be doing something besides blinking in the sun. Folks in Leeston and the hills will forget about his being nabbed twice by Federal men maybe in time. But a Wellcome not keeping his word! A Porky Wellcome! When Porky men ask Jailer Saul Bankey again to be let out to see to their crops or sell their live stock or even bury their dead what will he say? He'll say no. Jailer Bankey's answer is sounding in Davey's ear; his answer is plain; Davey can hear him like he's present:

"Can't. Yuh Porky men hain't tuh be trusted."

And other voices seem to be whispering in Davey's ears and heads nodding as he passes down Main street in Leeston on a weekly pilgrimage for provisions. Town and hill folks, Saturday crowds in Leeston, all pausing in their shopping to look at Davey.

"Dumb!" says the big Federal man. "Dumb as ——!"

"Women are dumb, too," says another.

"Yes, and even the children," a third voice says.

The Federal man with the student-like head who has been leaning on an elbow sits up. He is holding up a finger and he cocks his head.

"Not exactly dumb, chief. As a race they are, well, hardly articulate. You see— You see I've heard this about them; I believe there was a comprehensive article on this very thesis, quite recently, in a magazine. If I'm not mistaken—"

"Never mind a thesis, whatever it is. The point is—what is the point anyway? We want to know where our three men are and how this hill-billy here got his liberty; that's the point. You just save this high-brow stuff for 'em in Toledo. Or write it up for Hearst."

MOSE RICKET is shambling over now from the piggery; he is clearing his throat as he walks and pulling nervously at the skin of his neck. Davey won't talk and he's got to talk for him. When Mose Ricket reaches the group squatting in the shade and the eyes of the Federal men fasten on him his lips won't open. But his kinsman'll never speak for himself; he'll stand there blinking in the sun till it goes down and spells doom to a promise. All Davey would have to say would be that he was heading back for jail when the Federal men nabbed him and that he just came home to get his hogs. When he looks at Davey, Mose Ricket thinks easily of what his kinsman ought to say; that he's got to get back because he promised. When he glances at the Federal men to speak for Davey the words flee his mind. How was it the circuit attorney said it, about a hill-man's promise, when he made a speech at a fourth of July picnic in Leeston's Grove a couple of years ago? Porky Gold was what he called it. Hill-men of Porky never spoke to each other about it any more than they spoke the word "love"; they just went on living the same way. But when the circuit attorney finished his speech Leeston folks and folks from the hills walked around hushed for a spell, gazing at Porky men. The Porky men and women grew red in the face.

So Davey's kinsman wishes the circuit attorney were present to speech-make. When Mose Ricket looks at the Federal men sitting on the ground, sees the corners of their mouths turned up, sees the lazy winks one of them is throwing his chief he can't say a thing. When he looks at Davey again words come. Mose Ricket's got to get a few of them out. The two hill-men are looking at each other now. Davey with a helpless look in his eyes is hanging a load on Mose Ricket.

"Tell 'em yuh war a-goin' back, Davey."

Mose Ricket keeps his eyes on his kinsman while the Federal men glance at each other, the chief questioning the others with his eyes.

"Said something about going back," one of them says.

The chief glances at the two hill-men and his eyebrows knit.

"Going back where?"

"Tell 'em yuh war a-goin' back tuh jail, Davey. 'At yuh jest war let out tuh fotch yore hogs, tuh pay yore lawyer 'an tuh keep yore hogs from starvin'. Tell 'em yuh want tuh git back by sundown, 'at yuh give yore word yuh'd be thar."

Davey's eyes are brightening some. His kinsman's little speech put everything in a nutshell. Both hill-men feel lighter. The effect of Mose Ricket's words doesn't show itself for a few minutes. But the sun keeps on traveling, stepping over the treetops and the shadow of the cabin creeps over the stub.

A chuckle is the first sound coming from the Federal men. Chuckle from the chief who throws his head back and shakes it. "Pretty good! Fine!" he says.

The Federal man with glasses and the head of a student sits up straight and leans over nearer the chief.

"What were the man's remarks, chief? I cawn't seem to understand the dialect of these people."

"I cawn. The old boy here gets a notion he wants his hogs and walks right out of jail, same as out of a hotel. Tells the jailer when he's coming back. There's some good human stuff for you, Prof. There's a good reform for you to spring on the Cook County jailer when you get back to Chicago. A good, original reform. Get your social-working friends busy up there, so the gunmen and bootleggers can roam up and down Michigan Boulevard when they want the air. If they've forgotten something at their flop-house, why, let 'em go and get it; only make 'em promise they'll come back. Beats anything I ever heard."

The Federal man called "Professor" wipes his glasses. The other two subordinates laugh and wink at each other. The chief keeps shaking his head and chuckling.

The two hill-men can't understand the talk of the big Federal chief. Irony is foreign to the mountain mind; it doesn't penetrate. But the laughter and chuckling penetrate; they speak disbelief plain. Mose Ricket's brows are drawn way down; his indirect speech isn't believed. Government men don't believe his kinsman intended to go back, don't believe a Porky man speaks truth, don't believe a mountain man can get away on a promise. Mose Ricket's head is getting hot, and he mustn't let it. Going to be bad all around if he doesn't keep his blood cool. The four Government prohibition men all armed with rifle-guns have everything their own way; they'd shoot in a second if he tried to get his kinsman away. But Davey's got to be getting back to Leeston. The shadow has crept a foot while he has been standing there.

Mose Ricket turns to the Federal men and opens his mouth, but words don't come. No, he's got to look at Davey while he speaks; he's got to let his words fall back from his kinsman to the others.

"Tell 'em yuh got tuh be a-goin', Davey; got tuh git back afore tha suns sets."

"Don't worry. He'll go back all right."

"Tell 'em 'at yuh got tuh be a-startin', Davey."

"Fellow talks just like a drum," says the Federal chief. "And look at the other one blinking in the sun. Good stuff. Good original stuff."

"Maybe the man really wants to go back, chief." The student-like man says it.

"Tell 'em—" Mose Ricket begins.

"There goes that drum again. Say, we'll be going pretty soon." The chief's eyes are surveying the ground. They settle on an old bucket lying in the stub. The shadow of the cabin is traveling toward the bucket.

"We'll take the old boy back to town when the shade reaches the bucket, won't we boys?"

The other federal men nod and all stretch out. They hold to their carbines and watch the two hill-men through half-closed eyes.

DAVEY WELLCOME and his kinsman watch the shadow creeping toward the log. Mose Ricket puts his thumbs under his galluses. His kinsman's shackled hands give little jerks at the iron bracelets; they are not at home outside his pockets. Now and then Davey glances up at the sun and blinks. The sun was stepping too fast across the heavens a while back and now it doesn't seem to be moving. The shadow almost touches the log but the chief is making his body more comfortable. Davey is straightening up. He is setting his body, has one foot out, ready for the seven-mile hike to Leeston.

"Thar!" says Mose Ricket.

The chief throws a lazy glance at the bucket then makes his body more comfortable. His eyes are half-closed again.

"Thar!" says Davey Wellcome.

"What's your hurry?" The chief is throwing a wink at one of his men.

The only one who rises to his feet is the student like prohibition man. He is adjusting his coat and stretching.

"Strange our three men don't show up."

"Sit down. Sit down," says the chief. "Think I'm going to walk seven miles over hills and through timber to humor these two fellows? When our men come we'll take the prisoners back to jail in the wagon. Our men said they'd tie the team on the road and meet us here by the springs, didn't they? Well, don't get nervous."

"But maybe our men got lost."

"Lost? How are they going to get lost? They can —— near hear the springs from the road where they said they'd tie the horses. Say, won't they be surprized to see this old boy again? They think he's safe and snug in the cooler. I want to see their faces when they show up. This is a dodge these two hill-men are trying to spring. Play-acting, nothing else. The prisoner squinting at the sun all the time and his pardner talking like a drum. Just like one of those tom-toms. Beats out the same note all the time, just like a tom-tom. They'd like to get us in the middle of one of these jungles and give us the slip. And if this prisoner got away again an army couldn't find him. He's wise now and he'd be hidden away by some of his kin. We've got to have something to show for our time down here. They're play-acting, that's all. Sunshine and drums."

While the chief talks Mose Ricket and Davey Wellcome look at each other. They don't speak, don't bat an eye; but something is passing between them. Their minds are opening to each other; understanding is shown by silence. Mountain minds are crossing; subtle currents of thought meet, say all that needs to be said between the two hill-men while the Federal men smile and think the matter is ended. Much talk would alarm the Federal men; threats, wordy threats not coming they suspect nothing. Men knowing what the scream of a wildcat means but fooled by the silence of the cornered fox.

The shadow has climbed over the log; the sun, to Davey Wellcome, steps lively down the ridge top. Pretty soon Mose Ricket stretches, puts his hands back in his pockets and walks slowly away around the corner of the cabin. Resignation seems plain in his slow leisurely steps and hanging head, and in the aimless way his foot kicks a chip of wood.

The Federal men glance back over their shoulders, watch the hill-man disappear from view and settle again.

Davey Wellcome sits down now; his manacled hands, browned, square fingered and mottled with freckles, lie awkwardly on his knees. His face says no more than a rock does. He is as unmoving as the hills.

Silence and the poise of nature make city men fidget; their nerves are fed on commotion. Silence is an irritant. So these Federal men keep shifting their bodies and rise to peer through the trees in the direction of the Singing Springs. The silence allows the tinkle of the waters to reach their ears faintly.

"Wonder where our men are!" the chief says.

They talk back and forth now about the three men who took Davey to jail in Leeston. They've all got theories they explode one after the other. The sound of their voices is feeding their nerves. They begin to talk about being hungry and about getting back to civilization, where local officers help enforce the prohibition law. Where people know how to talk. The cooler air from the low forest strikes them. Their faces dry and they don't have to mop sweat. Looks like they are fixed comfortable except that their stomachs are calling for food.

A melodious soft call reaches their ears from the heights of Porky Ridge.

"*Whooooooo. Whooooooo. Whooooooo.*"

The student-like man glances at his three companions. His eyes question. The chief sees his deputy's brows knit and laughs; he winks at the other deputies. When the student-like man opens his mouth to speak the chief holds up the palm of his hand.

"Don't tell me you've never heard an owl before, Professor. Don't tell me. Can't stand it."

"*Whooooooo.*" Call sounds nearer.

The student-like man is still reddening. He wipes his glasses and throws a glance at Davey Wellcome. The hill-man doesn't bat an eye, just sits like a rock. But the deputy wiping his glasses keeps his eyes on him.

"*Whooooooo.*" The call is creeping down the slope of Porky.

One of the deputies yawns and shifts his position on the ground.

"I've heard that where there's an owl in a barn there's never any rats or mice. They say owls are better than dogs or cats."

"They drive away bats, too, don't they?" One of the other deputies says it.

"Where in —— are our men?" The chief frowns and glances in the direction of the brook. He raises his arms over his head and takes a long stretch.

The student-like man glances at the chief suddenly, and says, falteringly—

"I thought owls were only abroad at night."

His arms still held high, as if they were fixed in the air, the chief's eyes change expression. The *whooooooo* comes again, still nearer it sounds. With a quick flash of alarm in his eyes the chief drops his arms. He sits for a moment, then yawns and rises. Forced casualness is in his steps as he walks over to Davey Wellcome, air of coolness as he unlocks the bracelet on Davey's left wrist, snaps it on his own left, and sits down again. The linked arms of the chief and his prisoner rest on the ground between them. Davey doesn't move and the chief only whistles softly to himself.

Tension grips the deputies and they show it. They move up a little nearer their chief. One of them throws the lever on his Winchester carbine. The click brings a frown from the chief.

"Take it cool," he says. "If you get excited we'll all be murdered." The chief coughs and his eyes sweep the clearing around Davey's cabin. "Take it cool," he repeats. "We've got the Government back of us, ain't we? You don't hear that owl any more do you? The Prof may be wrong. Maybe an owl'd *whooooooo,* if he was chased out of a tree. The point is that we've got Washington behind us. These hill-billies know better than to start a war. Where in —— are our men?"

The silence now is heavy; it feels thick to the Federal men, whose eyes dart here and there about the edge of the surrounding timber. They seem to be bracing themselves. All are holding their carbines.

THE men seem to see the dirt and stub ploughed up before they hear a report from the timber. The three deputies, separated from their chief and Davey by five feet, jump up, instinctively they back before they look around. No smoke anywhere. Gun-fire sounds from three different quarters now and the bullets whipping the stub in front of the three deputies drive them away from the chief and his prisoner. New tactics to city men, Government men; bullets always hitting the stub near their feet, driving the deputies step by step back toward the brook and Davey pulling the other way, jerking the chief past the cabin, toward Porky. Tug of war with the chief yelling orders and cursing the hill-man, orders and curses drowned out by gun-fire. The chief's right hand is clutching the links between the handcuffs because the bracelet is cutting his wrist. The chief is heavier than Davey, but weight isn't counting. Toughness of hide counts.

Retreating step by step toward the scrub by the brook, the deputies begin firing blindly into the thick timber. They only bluff at aiming, pointing their carbines in the direction the reports come from. And the reports from the guns of the unseen are always shifting. It might as well be night, black night without moon or stars, instead of broad daylight. The deputies might as well be blindfolded. One of the wild shots of the deputies whistles past the chief's ears as it speeds toward the timber, making him swear and dodge. His right hand leaves the handcuffs to gesture to his men. Davey jerks. Gets his enemy into the timber.

New calls and shouts sound suddenly from the brook bottom. Three more men issue from the scrub by the brook. The three Federal men who took Davey to the Leeston jail have returned at last. Six deputies now firing blindly at the unseen. The newcomers advance ahead of the other three a few steps before they read and understand what the bullets say as they whip the stub at their feet. One of them is shot in the foot before he stops and is helped back under the cover of the scrub.

For a minute the chief gives to Davey, seems to surrender and follows without being jerked. The hill-man squints through the tree-tops; his chin is lifted just right for the chief to get under with his fist. Not a straight-from-the-shoulder punch but a swing, carrying all the weight and power the Federal man can put into it. The hill-man staggers, reels and falls. His whole weight is taken by the chief's raw wrist. The head of the hill-man gives a little shake on the ground. He blows queerly through his nose and rises.

Still dazed, Davey takes another blow on the chin before he locks with the enemy. They both upset in the struggle. When men fight in the prize ring there's a chance to dodge, retreat, dance away, hit and dance away again. The Government man's arms and legs are used to quick, surprize hits and retreats. Even with his left arm shackled he keeps jerking it up as a guard and his shoulders and head are set in the attitude of the ring. He shows all over that he's had ring training before he got fat. His fat is soft and his wind goes quick but he's fast with his right arm. If he weren't shackled to the hill-man he could swing and jab until the hill-man was cold and escape punishment himself. But the Government man is tied to his punishment. It's rough and tumble, hill-fighting now. The two blows Davey Wellcome received under the chin were the undoing of his enemy. Science is useless against Davey Wellcome, who can fight better on the ground than on his feet.

The hill-man is gouging, unmindful of the short range jabs of his enemy; he twists the Government man's ears, jerks without mercy on the shackles, presses his knee against his belly. When with a mighty effort the Government man throws off the hill-man and finds himself on top it doesn't help any; he can't stay on top, a wild horse couldn't toss him quicker than the hill-man does. Again they roll, always toward the thick timber, always toward the sun. Both are hitting while they're down. The Federal man is learning how to gouge; but the power is going from his arms and fingers, his wind, too, is going.

Into the laurel scrub skirting the forest they roll, the stiff stems of the bushes scratching their faces. Davey Wellcome squirms loose and rises to his feet. The Government man has to rise, though he looks like he'd rather squat there and fill his lungs; his raw wrist can't stand Davey's jerks on the shackles. The Government man's ears are bleeding, his cheeks show the impression of the hillman's thumbs. One eye is turning black and blue, not from a blow but from the pressing of Davey's thumb.

Where the hill-man pulls and jerks the Federal man has to follow; and the hill-man is tugging his enemy out of the scrub now and up the slope of Porky Ridge. The Federal man has stopped swearing and cursing because he needs all his wind to climb. Half-way up the slope of Porky the Federal man grips the links between the handcuffs to ease the strain; he halts and pulls back. Another tug of war. The hill-man's got to bite the knuckles of the enemy's right fist to free it from the links before he can pull and jerk him up to the top of Porky. There the Government man drops. His lungs are empty. While his enemy's lungs fill, while his mouth dips air from the steady mountain current, Davey blinks at the sun. Six miles yet to Leeston, almost. The hill-man is traveling like the crow flies but the sun is racing.

WHEN Davey jerks on the shackles again to begin the drag of his enemy down the other side of Porky the Government man holds up his right hand meaning he's ready to dicker; he wants to turn Davey loose and takes the handcuff key from his pocket.

"You're not going to butcher me, get me way off and butcher me. I'll let you go but we'll get you again if it takes the whole Federal Government. We'll bring an army down here to get you and get your friends for aiding a prisoner to escape. Keep that hand still if you want to get loose. We'll clean out the hills with every man we've got. How can I turn you loose if you keep jerking that way?"

The hill-man's forehead and brows are wrinkling. In his mind he sees the prohibition men squatting by his cabin, sees the shadow of his cabin creeping toward the battered pail upside down on the stub. Words seem to echo in Davey's ears, "We'll take the old boy back when the shadow reaches the bucket, won't we boys?" But the shadow climbs the bucket in Davey's mind's eye and the Government men don't move.

"You're a —— fool," says the Federal man, gripping the handcuff links with his right hand. "Can't you understand? I'm going to let you go. You're going to be set loose so you can hide some place from the law. Can't you understand American at all?"

Rough and tumble again! The hill-man biting the federal man's hand free of the shackle links, then jerking him to his feet, tugging him fast down the slope of Porky.

"——! You're thick, you biting dog! You've made me drop the key! Lost the key! I was going to turn you loose! Turn you loose! Go back and help me find that key! Stop blinking in the sun and bumping me into these trees! Say, can't you understand anything? ——! You're just like an animal! Just like a dumb beast. Fight just like a bear. A biter and scratcher. Like a cat! Where you taking me? You'll swing if you do anything to me!"

The Federal man is going down hill now and he can spend his wind talking. Talking about armies and flying machines that will find his body. And threats follow one another as he is pulled across the narrow valley lying between Porky Ridge and the knob. He is looking down while he steps. The base of the knob is covered thick with swamp oak and above the swamp oak, magnolia and laurel hide the summit of the knob. When they step suddenly from the marshy flat ground on to the first sharp rise of the knob the Federal man stops dead.

"Won't go another —— step! You hear?"

Davey yanks again. The Federal man's body resists; Davey picks up a broken branch and hits the raw knuckles of that right hand until it lets go. The next yank makes the Federal man follow. The metal bracelet burns his raw wrist; it sears as if it is red hot. Porky is steep but the knob is steeper. The sweat is dripping from the exhausted Government man's chin. He turns his head so that his mouth is up wind; his mouth is open and dipping into the air current that travels steadily around the knob.

When two-thirds of the way up the knob the Government man drops. He can't talk but he makes signs with his right hand. The hill-man braces his feet against a tree trunk and jerks. The enemy is afraid to clutch the handcuff links with his right hand; the club is ready to strike again. If his knuckles receive one more blow like that they're going to split open. If the hill-man jerks on the handcuffs much longer the Federal man's left wrist will be scorched through. Something's got to give. The Federal man gives by crawling on his knees to ease the strain. He rises, wavers slightly, then begins the climbing again.

On the summit of the knob Davey lets the Government man sit down for a moment and, shading his eyes from the sinking sun, makes out the roof of the bank building in Leeston in the distance. The metal roof catches the sun's rays. Two miles yet to the court-house. A cloud is hugging the horizon and the sun is racing for cover. The Federal man doesn't see the town ahead of him. His eyes are looking down the slope of the knob, heavy eyes see more hills ahead, small hills but steep.

Again that jerk on the shackles, burning, searing fire on the Federal man's left wrist, skinned knuckles on his right. His legs ache; they take him on after Davey because its down-hill. Gravity is pulling and the Federal man has to follow; has to throw his legs out or pitch forward on his head. Sometimes his free right hand clutches trees and saplings to steady himself; weak grasp though, his fingers can't hold.

Across another narrow valley. Marshy ground but level. When they approach a low hill Davey Wellcome leads the Federal man around it. They are zigzagging around the knolls, following creek beds and small marshy ravines. Now a stretch of flat pasture land, slanting slightly to Main street in Leeston below the grove. When they crawl under a fence and start up the road toward the business-stores the Federal man stumbles over the baked wagon ruts and hoof-holes for a hundred feet before he looks up. They reach the grove before he takes his eyes off the ground. The forms of men sitting up in the grove to stare at the two coming flick the tail of the Federal man's eye. His eyes open wide; his surprize seems to petrify his body and glue his feet to the road. But the jerks come, again, burning his wrist. His feet step out.

The Federal man sees the idlers and storekeepers ahead sitting on stoops or leaning against the buildings under the porticos and looking down the road at Davey Wellcome and him. Sees them pull their hats down over their eyes. Sees men sleeping in the grove aroused with a kick or a nudge by those who are awake. Sees women and children fall back into the doorways of stores to peer out. A hush has seized the town. Leeston is puzzled. Some of the town people scratch their heads, others their chins. Some open their mouths. Davey Wellcome leading a bloody, stumbling stranger! The status of the two men coming up the road is puzzling to Leeston. To those ignorant of what came before the whole thing is shrouded in mystery.

The people don't understand yet. Realization of that fact strikes the Federal man sharply. A mountaineer dragging a Government man up the road toward jail; a Government man, symbol of the law, made the leading character in a farce! The Federal man, at first vaguely, then clearly, feels drama; and drama can be turned, shaped. The village folks they're approaching are like an audience waiting for a climax. Self-pity over his bruises and soreness, his memory of every inch of the way he was dragged over the hills and beaten, trailed in the dust, are calling for effacement. Swiftly the past two hours are reviewed in his mind. And more swiftly still the chance for a high point comes to him, the chance for drama. Drama in which he can fly a high pennant, make the higher-ups in Washington marvel, make his own men marvel because they only saw the beginning. What came between, in the lone hills, needn't be known. Alone in the lawless mountains, fighting every inch of his way but holding to his man, bleeding, torn, hungry, almost done for, but bringing in his man. In the worst part of the hinterland, where the prohibition service has always met defeat, he does the impossible, the heroic. This is the way he sees it, the way he can make others see it. Drama!

DRAMA now! The Federal man stepping ahead of Davey Wellcome. And when the hill-man catches up the Federal man keeps alongside. As they pass the silent gazing forms under the porticos the Federal man gives little jerks on the handcuffs; he forges ahead again; he is leading. "Come on! Come on!" The emphatic ring of the law's voice reaches the ears of folks under the porticos on both sides the street while the shackled men pass. Triumph heats the Federal man's blood; he is unmindful of the sawing of the bracelet on his raw wrist; he's drunk with glory and feels shame turned into triumph. He's twisting a pattern; he's weaving the heroic. The hill-man is blinking in the sun, looking straight ahead, oblivious to the spectacle, not seeing or understanding.

But everything's *too* theatrical. Flaw in the weaving! The false note is sounded up and down the street, both sides, as the two men approach the drug-store. Maybe nature is rebelling, maybe nature is pressing silent men to speak. Life out of plumb! Porky pattern twisted! The bad proportions make some of the onlookers smile. But it's old man Taney, Porky Taney, standing in front of his harness shop, stroking his bearded chin, who sees the flaw in the pattern quick. He's struggling to say something. He speaks with a red face.

"Kep' his word."

Old man Taney's words are caught by the storekeepers and idlers.

"Kep' his word," men repeat under the porticos.

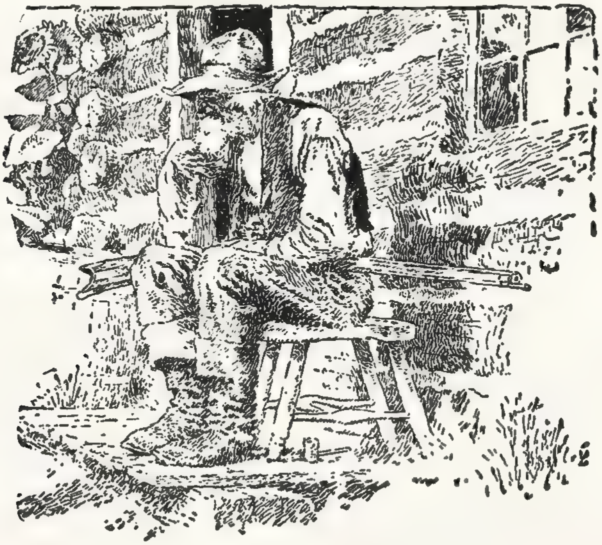
The Federal man hears and feels that he's suddenly naked before the town; feels that even his mind is open to village folks like a book. He stops spurting ahead of the hill-man. Something like stage-fright grips him.

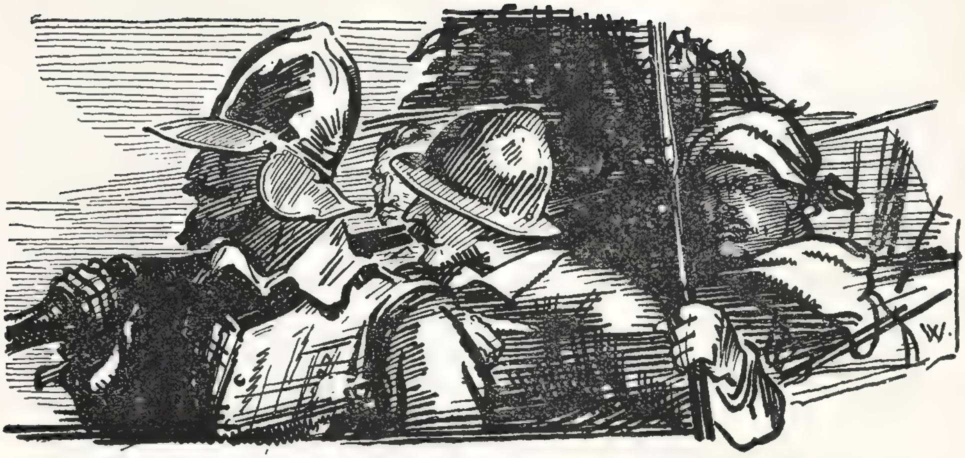
Fallon, the druggist, steps off his stoop to the sidewalk, he points after the passing men with his thumb.

"Porky gold!"

These two words are not echoed but the men under the porticos nudge each other as they hear. Some nod their heads, some smile. Old man Taney's eyes are wet and he goes into his harness shop to wipe them. Fallon mops his forehead as from the effect of a long oration.

Westward, through the vista between low hills, the forming thunderhead is changed a little in its course by high winds, allowing the sun to linger. The sun filters through the elms as the hillman and the law cut across the court-house yard. The hill-man leads. Patterns are straightening. *Life* weaving!





ESTEVAN, THE BIG SMOKE

An Article

by Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "That Little Guy of Peter Paul," "Snapshotting War," etc.

I GIVE you the story of Estevan, the Big Smoke.

No fiction, this. I swear by the Seven Emeralds of Totonteac no fiction dreamer could compose a narrative like this; nor—by a miracle, achieving such—could he persuade an editor it was original. Rather, the story of Estevan the Moroccan slave who died an emperor in the First City of Cibola—died with raw turquoises round his neck and little gold bells on his black ankles—is a forgotten fact epic long buried amid musty parchment leaves in a library of Spain.

Texas should know Estevan; though his color might prevent the erection of any statues to him in that sovereign State. New Mexico and Arizona are blissfully ignorant of the part Estevan played as pathfinder across their most ancient frontiers; one of four men from the Old World who were the first to traverse their mountains and deserts. I have worried through some ancient Spanish script and many cross-references in English, not with a purpose to glorify Estevan as the Big Smoke—the black man—but to rescue for modern readers a gorgeous tale of romance.

You'll have to go back with me to that dizzy day of swashbuckling adventure before the bones of Columbus were long in their tomb and when Spanish gentlemen ruffians in steel were ranging the far horizons of a New World in search of gold and pearls and plumes. When every palm-fringed coast beckoned to adventure inland and it was the fashion to hoist the Cross and the standard of Castile and proclaim to wide-eyed Indians the establishment of a gracious Majesty's dominion.

The year is 1527, almost four centuries ago; but what is the anchoring of a date against the strong tide of romance which has been at the flood since an architect's plans went wrong at Babel? In the harbor of Trinidad in the Caribbean Sea two gentlemen adventurers united their little fleets to have a go at the unknown north and west of Cuba. They were Pamfilo de Narvaez and Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca (Cow's-Head). Of the first Spaniard we know very little except that he achieved a colossal failure. Señor Cow's-Head has lived four hundred years as the writer of the greatest adventure story since Moses. Aboard the united fleet of caravels which sailed from Trinidad was the Moroccan Estevan, slave and body-servant of one Andres Dorantes.

Alvar Nuñez does not turn aside to describe a black slave in the *Relación* he wrote for the eye of the King of Spain in 1542. You could hardly expect a Spanish gentleman to do that. So it pleases me to fancy this Estevan as other Moroccans; tall, gaunt, big-boned and ebony. I can see him with festoons of leeches about his calves as he strides naked through Florida swamps. I can picture him many years later, when perhaps his kinky hair has begun to whiten, a buffalo robe wrapped regally about his shoulders, blue matrix of turquoise in his ears and eagles' feathers bound round his brow.

Well, the records show that this Narvaez expedition to the Florida west coast was a tragedy. Read for yourself, if you can, the story in Alvar Nuñez' *Relación*, a copy of which is in the New York Public Library. Hostile Indians decimated the ranks of the proud Spaniards. Storms caught their little vessels and smashed them. Finally from a point somewhere just east of the Mississippi delta the survivors tried to get away in boats of their own manufacture. They carried their fresh water in bottles made of the dried skin of horses' legs.

More storms, separation of the frail craft in the Gulf and at long last Alvar Nuñez and fifteen of his boat's crew landed on Malhado (Misfortune) Island, which has been vaguely identified as the island upon which the city of Galveston now stands. They had been at such extremities—Alvar Nuñez confesses it himself—that they had lived off the flesh of their dead companions, dried like jerkey in the smoke of fires.

The Spanish gentleman and his companions were made slaves of the Indians. They were bought and sold from tribe to tribe. They were naked as the dawn. They lived on shell fish and roots. And they died of exposure and of wounds received at the hands of their taskmasters.

Lucky chance ordered it that the tribe wherein Alvar Nuñez had been sold in slavery made an expedition to the west to gather the fruit of the prickly pear, and on that journey the desolate white man was overjoyed to meet three other survivors of the ill-fated expedition: Andres Dorantes and his body-servant, Estevan, and Alonzo del Castillo Maldonada—all enslaved.

Here were four sole survivors of the more than four hundred who had sailed from Trinidad for the conquest of Florida.

The four were separated by the subsequent migrations of their masters, but not until they had made a plan of escape. It was almost two years before that plan could be put into successful execution. Two added years of frightful misery.

Finally the three white men and the black managed to slip away from their Indian captors and unite for a desperate journey afoot across the continent. This was in 1534, seven years after the departure from Trinidad.

It is not my purpose to dwell at length upon that first transcontinental journey ever made by Europeans. Nothing so daring in the history of our country; no, absolutely no exploit can touch it. Four men, naked and without food or weapons, start from the Gulf somewhere between modern Galveston and Corpus Christi and pass through an unexplored land over a continental divide and down to the Gulf of California. Neither Lewis and Clark nor Zebulon Pike can qualify in their category.

A few high lights of that journey must be caught because of their bearing upon the subsequent exploits of Estevan, the Big Smoke.

It seems that when the four refugees got away from the vicinity of the Gulf, where the Indians had seen the dwindling of the Spanish band and discovered the white man was human—a man who could starve like other men and feel pain under blows—when they left this sophistication, I say, god-like attributes were crowded upon them by the stranger tribes.

EARLY on the march the services of the white gods were requisitioned to heal the sick. Alvar Nuñez confesses they all tried to dodge this ticklish business. When evasion was no longer possible the leader would breathe upon the face of the invalid, make the sign of the cross and invoke the blessing of the Almighty upon him. Always, says the naïve chronicler, this simple treatment resulted in cure. And we can not go behind the word of this pious Spanish gentleman.

Wherefore their fame preceded them. When with reluctance a tribe of wandering red men consented to the four's going westward, ever westward, runners would go ahead to proclaim the coming of healing gods and they would be escorted by hundreds.

And, mark you, Estevan himself tried this healing business, tried it and, as the phrase has it, got away with it. Moor as he was, he could qualify as a good Christian.

Gifts were showered upon the westering vagabonds; skins of the deer and buffalo—they were the first white Europeans to see the American bison—arrows and beads. A copper bell with a human face carved upon it and arrow-heads of "emerald"—probably malachite—the leader kept to display to the avaricious eyes of his compatriots when he at last achieved the outposts of the Spanish settlements in New Spain.

But our wise Estevan learned a thing or two when the wanderers found themselves nearing the country of the permanent dwellings, which would be the Zuni villages of New Mexico. Upon the wanderers' approach to a village, the savages would come out to meet them, carrying large gourds punctured with holes and filled with little pebbles. These were the "big medicine"—objects of the deepest reverence. They still play a large part in the ceremonial dances of the Moquis and Navajos of our Southwest.

As marks of the highest honor some of these gourds were bestowed upon the travelers. They discovered that sending ahead a befeathered gourd by their faithful runners always assured their welcome at the hands of a tribe to be visited.

Canny Estevan evidently kept some of these magic gourds against possible future use.

So fared the four, "naked by daytime, wrapping ourselves in our deer hides at night," across plains, mountains, deserts until one day Castillo saw upon the neck of an Indian the buckle of a sword belt and a nail from a horse's shoe. First sign of a long journey's end.

They came to the Spanish outpost of San Miguel de Culiacan, now the capital of the Mexican state of Sinaloa, April 1, 1536. Two years after escaping from Indian slavery on the Gulf of Mexico!

I can see the Big Smoke now commencing to find himself—to "carry a lot of pork" as they say in the South. He is made a free man by his master, Andres Dorantes; for who could claim to be master over one with whom for two years one had walked naked in the wilderness? He goes to Mexico City with his *capitán*, Alvar Nuñez—very likely with his trick gourds and his handfuls of raw turquoise—to make report to Don Antonio de Mendoza, first Viceroy of New Spain. Undoubtedly he makes a hit in the big town, for we find him referred to by one chronicler of the time as "Estevanillo"—Little Stephen. The Spanish tongue gives the diminutive as a mark of affection rather than as a qualification of physique.

Now we come to Estevan, the Big Smoke, in the rôle of a history maker; aye, as father of a legend still green to this day. That is the legend of the Seven Cities of Cibola—cities of gold and precious stones. Those seven dream cities of a Moroccan negro's imagination prompted Coronado to make a swing round the circle from the Gulf of California even to Kansas. Even today in Arizona you'll find an occasional mad prospector who's looking for them.

The New Spain to which Alvar Nuñez and his three companions came overland was in the throes of an excitement hectic as any gold rush of more recent times. That was the craze for discovery—for finding the rainbow's end somewhere in the dim north beyond the farthest Spanish outpost.

And here came four men out of that fabled North bearing arrowheads of emerald and telling of towns they'd seen whose houses reared three and four stories from the ground. No wonder the viceroy's gentlemen in steel went wild.

The viceroy selected Don Francisco Vasquez Coronado, a fightin' fool if there ever was one, to head an expedition over Alvar Nuñez' back track. But, being a very religious man, the king's representative thought it wise to send a messenger of the Church ahead of the armed expedition to prepare the Indians spiritually for what was to follow. He selected Fray Marcos de Niza, a Savoyard, who was vice-commissioner-general of New Spain.

Now the good Fray had had experience in the Spanish method of converting the heathen—he'd been with Pizarro in Peru. He was of physical fiber tough as his ecclesiastical armor; one of the long line of priest-explorers who helped carve the great Southwest out of limbo.

Viceroy Mendoza insisted Fray Marcos take with him our Estevan as well as a couple of hundred Indians who had come into civilization with Alvar Nuñez. Here was the big chance for the Moor!

Fray Marcos and his expedition quit San Miguel de Culiacan, the jumping-off place for the North, March 7, 1539. He went by way of the Sonora river to about where the hamlet of Matapa now stands and then decided upon a halt while Estevan should pioneer the route ahead.

In his report to the viceroy, Fray Marcos does not give a specific reason why he wished to get rid of Estevan. It is a shrewd guess that the Big Smoke was becoming a nuisance. I fancy he had a pretty good opinion of Estevan by this time; moreover, his fancy was prone to stray toward the Indian women, and Fray Marcos de Niza was a strict Puritan in matters of conduct.

AT ANY rate, forward went Estevan and a number of the converted Indians who had been his companions on the last lap of the great overland trip. And with these instructions, as quoted in the quaint phrase of Richard Hakluyt:

"That if it were but a meane thing (which he spied out) hee should send mee a white crosse of one handfull long; and if it were of any greater matter, one of two handfulls long. And if it were a Countrey greater and better than Nueva España, hee should send me a greate crosse."

So off went Estevan, a real explorer. He doubtless followed the valley of the Santa Cruz past where the twin towns of Nogales now mark the Border and in the direction of Tucson, Arizona.

And, sure enough, within four days, back came some Indian messengers to where Fray Marcos waited. They carried a cross as big as a man!

"Estevan had not found a meane thing."

Through his messengers Estevan told the friar the Indians with whom he stopped had told him of "the greatest thing in the world." Seven cities in the Kingdom of Cibola, the nearest thirty days' journey from where he, Estevan, was stopping, where the doorways of the houses were inlaid with gold and turquoises and every man wore turquoise in his nose and ears.

No wonder Estevan expressed the superlative by a cross as big as a man.

Fray Marcos despatched runners to catch up with the negro and bid him wait the coming of the main expedition. But he could not stop the Big Smoke; Fray Marcos never even saw him again.

For now the hero of this old tale of high adventure had run hog-wild, as the saying goes. He was on his own. He was lording it over three hundred Indians; for to that number his retainers were augmented as he passed through village after village. He was headed for those gold and turquoise doorways—jackrabbits step aside an' give the gent'mum room!

Vainly Fray Marcos tried to stop this ungodly ambassador to the Seven Cities of Cibola; his messengers never came back to him. All he could do was follow after the wide trail Estevan was making across the white-hot heart of Arizona—to the Gila. Up the Gila to what is now called the Salt River and so eastward over country where auto busses now travel the Apache Trail. Deeper always into the mysterious North.

I can see this rascal Estevan under the burning blue of an Arizona sky up where the Little Colorado flows deep below the summits of cathedral cliffs. I see him at the head of his cavalcade of Indians; the Big Smoke on a mule, others afoot—and his "pussonel women" toting his baggage on their heads. Estevan with his eagles' feathers bound to his black head by bands of glowing turquoise; with the anklets of little gold and copper bells jingling to the pace of his mount; his trick gourd carried in his hand like a scepter.

He who had been born a slave in Africa, who had done slave work for Indians in Florida and then walked naked across the continent, was now an emperor. So he called himself. When he came to a village he grandly breathed on the faces of the sick and made the sign of the cross over their breasts, then accepted a basketful of blue stones and a comely maiden for his imperial due and passed on.

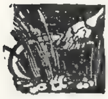
On into the unknown and to his fate!

Marcos de Niza climbed to the summit of the Continental Divide. An Indian, bloodied and spent, met him with the news that the Black Mexican had arrived at the first of the cities of Cibola but a day's march down the mountains and there had been plundered of all his possessions and thrown into prison.

It required all the good friar's persuasion and the last of his store of gifts to induce two of the Indian chiefs in his train to accompany him nearer to Cibola so that he might learn more of the negro's fate. They advanced with trepidation and at last came in sight of "a good fair city which is situated on a plain at the foot of a round hill. The houses are built in order, according as the Indians tell me; all made of stone with divers stories and flat roofs as far as I could discern from a mountain, whither I ascended to view the cities."

Still a safe distance from this first of the Cibolan cities, Fray Marcos raised a cross and took possession of that one and the other mythical six beyond the horizon in the name of his Spanish master. Then with more fear than food, as he frankly wrote in his subsequent report, he turned to retrace his steps to Mexico.

De Niza did not abandon Estevan to his fate. He had already met that.

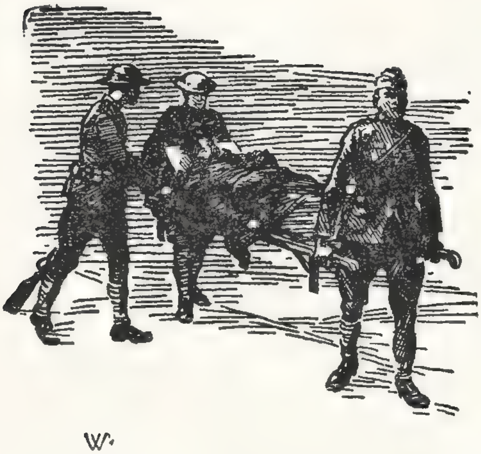


A YEAR later when Coronado's expedition came to this Zuni town, called Ki-ak-ki-ma, various versions of the death of the Black Mexican were gleaned by the Spaniards. Read this in the *Relación de la Jornáda de Cibola* by Castañeda:

"As I said, Estevan reached Cibola loaded with a large quantity of turquoises and several pretty women the Indians had given him. These Indians had followed him from all the settlements he had passed, believing that under his protection they could traverse the whole world without danger. But as the people in this country were more intelligent than those who followed Estevan they lodged him in a little hut they had outside the village, and the older men and the governors heard his story and took steps to find out the reason he had come to that country.

"The account which the negro gave them . . . made them think that he must be a spy or a guide from some nations which wished to conquer them; for it seemed unreasonable to them to say that the people were white in the country from which he came and that he was sent by them, he being black. Besides other reasons, they thought it hard for him to ask them for turquoises and women, and so they decided to kill him."

So passed in the legendary First City of Cibola—in reality a dirty Zuni pueblo—the father of a gorgeous yarn of gold and turquoise which is with us to this day. Aye, and an adventurer who, like Roosevelt, wanted a little brandy in the wine of life.



CHEVRONS

A Five Part Story.. Conclusion..

By Leonard H. Nason

Author of "Burial," "Souvenirs," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

SERGEANT ROBERT EADIE, U. S. Artillery, was at the base hospital at Vittel. He had been shell-shocked and gassed. Disgusted with the frightful food, the heat and the overcrowding at the replacement camp, he and a Private Darcy had deserted and set out to rejoin their company at Vaucouleurs. But at Vaucouleurs they discovered that the company had moved on to Toul.

In a clearing in the woods they discovered a cook who was putting steaks in the box.

"Steak!" said Darcy.

"Give us some grub," said Eadie.

"All right," the cook answered. "Only cut me some wood first."

When they had cut the wood the cook gave them each a can of salmon. They beat him up thoroughly and ran. Later, on the road, an M. P. in a truck passed him.

"You the guys that beat up the cook?" he asked.

"What cook?" asked Eadie.

"Say," said the M. P., "I ain't askin' official. I wanna know for myself."

"Well, we had a few words with a guy back there," Eadie told him.

"Jump in," said the M. P. "That was the C. O.'s pet private cook, an' I'd better lift ya to Toul before they start scoutin' for ya."

They arrived at Toul and found their battalion. The captain told Eadie that they were preparing a drive, and Eadie had an hour to prepare for it. Eadie discovered that there had been rumors about the post that he had deserted; and he was bantered a great deal about his wound stripe—which he was wearing without authority to do so.

Eadie was detailed as liaison sergeant with an infantry battalion and followed their captain into a trench.

Berrup-Blam!

"There go my guns," cried Eadie excitedly.

"It's time we were going," said the captain.

The engagement, however, proved to be child's play, and was over with little noise and practically no casualties. Eadie returned to his battery which was preparing a march nearer the front.

On the march Eadie ran into a man named Jake whom he had known on the transport. Jake was a big red-headed fellow and attached himself to the sergeant.

When the captain summoned Eadie to tell him of another engagement in which the sergeant would accompany the infantry, he asked whom the sergeant wanted to accompany him.

"Red Jake," said Eadie.

"Why," said the captain, "he hasn't the brains or the education to make a liaison man."

"I know," said Eadie, "but he'll do what I tell him."

Eadie refused to believe that this fight would be any worse than the last; but Jake was frankly scared. They went into a trench to sleep.

Then they were awakened by a great firing of guns. The Boche. The Boche had opened fire.

Eadie and Jake advanced, the former now convinced that this would be a real fight. They became lost, tied up with a detachment of infantry, discovered that they were advancing in the wrong direction, and finally discovered a young captain with whom they proceeded toward the front.

They passed through a town and beyond, when the captain received a note from headquarters telling him to advance farther immediately. This move brought death to the captain and dispersed most of the company. Jake and the sergeant were once again in the middle of No Man's Land, with no work to do. Finally they found a shell-hole full of infantry officers. The major in command detailed them to go back to the artillery to request a barrage.

On the way back they ran into a road full of trucks. Suddenly they saw an officious shavetail lieutenant named Connor from their own battery.

"What are you men doing?" he asked.

"Carrying a message to the artillery, sir," said Eadie.

"You're lying," said Connor. "I order you to come with me, to lay telephone wire."

There was nothing for Eadie and Jake to do but comply. Connor marched them to a different sector. They passed through a post behind some woods.

"If you want to commit suicide," said the men, "go an' lay wire in them woods." But Connor, without answering, pushed forward, the two men following him.

Slowly they weeded their way through this wood, not knowing where the Boche were. Suddenly out of the black came a curt, harsh voice—

"Halt!"

"We're Americans," said Eadie, for the first time distinguishing the uniform of the sentry. They had come upon what was left of the Third Brigade, that had been split into three details and which had been under constant fire for thirty-three hours. Seeing a ragged fellow who seemed to be an officer, in spite of his lack of conspicuous insignia, Lieutenant Connor approached him and announced—

"We've brought up wire from the information center."

"Wire!" roared the ragged one. "What the —— do I want with wire? If I knew you were coming around bothering me with wire I'd have let go a few slugs at you myself."

"Before we discuss that question further," said Connor haughtily, "let's settle the question of rank. I am a first lieutenant ranking from July 10, 1918."

"Rank!" roared the other. "Say, are you all crazy around here? I was a first lieutenant before you were born." Then a soldier came up dragging a wire, to which an instrument was soon attached and the man engaged in a heated conversation, during which Lieutenant Connor learned, to his chagrin, that the man he had challenged as to rank was a general, sent from G. H. Q. to straighten out the division.

Very shortly the Germans launched an attack from two sides at once, and in the ensuing charge and counter-charge, Lieutenant Connor and Eadie's pal, Red Jake, were killed. Eadie found himself separated from the hundred or so worn out and hungry survivors, and hearing a hissing noise and seeing a white vapor emanating from the same direction, he let drive a grenade that effectively wiped out a machine-gun crew which had been doing much damage in that sector. Then Eadie commandeered the gun, found that there were several boxes of ammunition, and presented the muzzle of the gun as a new wave of Germans renewed their advance. Eadie pumped away grimly until the gun became red-hot and jammed.

Finally the much harassed division was relieved by replacements, and Eadie, after much trouble, found himself with his own outfit, having been without food or sleep for three days and nights. A doctor from the replacement division wanted to send Eadie to the hospital because he had inhaled not a little gas, his mask having been ripped by a bayonet thrust, but Eadie, remembering how he had been bantered with about his previous case of gas, refused to be sent back, even having to resort to threatening the doctor with his pistol.

But Eadie's reception by his own officers was not heartening. His major thought that Eadie had been gold-bricking since he had been sent to accompany the infantry several days before. In spite of the fact that Eadie went into a thorough account of his activities during this time, he was put under arrest until the major could investigate.

Tired and discouraged, Eadie looked up the company cook who was glad to see him back and had fixed up a handout for him out of the only materials on hand—hardtack and karo. Eadie finished this simple repast, and as he got up to find some water—*WHOOOOOOOOO!* A shell demolished the rolling kitchen and nearly every one in the vicinity. Eadie received a serious abdominal wound—a good wound, he called it—and he was moved to a field hospital, where the doctors thought him as good as dead. One of them decided to operate, and as the ether was administered to him, Eadie said—

"Hey, Doc, don't begin to whittle till I'm asleep, will you?"

CHAPTER IX

TREATMENT OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

EADIE began to awaken as a man does after a long night's sleep. His first thought was that it was all over, whatever iron he carried had been removed, and now there was nothing to be done but to get well. He opened his eyes. There was a nurse beside him, a young one, who looked at him seriously.

"Waked up?" she asked. "How do you feel?"

"Great," said Eadie weakly.

"What was the matter?" asked the nurse. "Appendicitis?"

"Appendicitis ——! I was shot through the belly!"

The slightest flicker of annoyance passed over the nurse's face. She stepped quickly to the foot of the bed and read the card there. When she came back her expression had changed completely.

"Don't talk any more!" said the nurse quickly. "Not a word. If you have any pain, put up your hand and I'll come right down to you. Don't groan. Don't drink any water."

She put a basin on a chair where Eadie could reach it easily and went swishing away.

"Appendicitis!" thought Eadie. "Where did she get that?"

He became conscious of a great wide roll about his middle, a pile of bandages like a feather bed. Probably the nurse had seen this and leaped to the conclusion that Eadie had had his appendix removed. Probably they didn't see many belly wounds here. It was satisfying to have a real wound for once, a wound you could point to and say—"There it is!" or "If you don't believe it, read the card." And the whole outfit had seen him struck down! The major would be sore. Tough on the major. He would send pompously for Sergeant Eadie and would learn that Sergeant Eadie had been seriously wounded, and the same shell had killed two other men. He slept again, came back to consciousness and found a thermometer in his mouth, and slept once more.

It was broad daylight when Eadie opened his eyes again. His faculties were all working now; he could see, he could hear, he could smell. He was in a bare wooden structure, a portable house, one of those things that are put up by sections. It had a floor that boomed like a drum. Men in hobnails ran up and down this floor in a seeming endeavor to make all the noise possible. Doors banged incessantly. There was a steady flow of stretcher-bearers past the foot of Eadie's bed. *Clump, clump, clump.*

"Where yuh want this guy?"

"Put him in this bed. Wait till I throw a sheet on it."

"Use a little speed, will yuh? He weighs a ton."

The place was thick with cigaret smoke, making the sergeant cough. His head began to spin with the noise. There were men in that ward that were silent and motionless, and there were others who sat up in bed smoking, shouting their experiences the length of the ward.

"I come round the corner and I seen 'em. I yells to the lootenant, s'I, 'Here's the Boche!' Then I got it through the arm. There was near a hundred of 'em behind some narrow-gauge railroad tracks. We cleaned 'em all up. Me'n Jack there come out together."

" 'S right. Didja see the airerplane we shot down? Volley fire, yells the Old Man! Down she comes. Bing! Say, I hope I get sent to a base near Saint Nazaire. I landed there. There's some mamselles I know in that town would knock your eye out!"

"Who the ——'s got a butt? Yuh know where we're at? I don't. Verdun, maybe. Saint Mihiel. We was all day in a truck gettin' here."

Eadie's head swam. The noise was a real pain and the cigaret smoke burned like fire. A doctor and a nurse appeared and stopped at the next bed. They looked at the man there in silence and the the nurse did something with the sheet. Eadie turned for a better look. They had covered the other man's face.

"Now, then," said the doctor, "this man."

The nurse turned back the blankets, pulled up Eadie's shirt and cut away the bandage. Eadie raised up and regarded himself. He had a long seam in his abdomen, neatly sewed in criss-cross stitches. It looked a lot like the lacing on a football and the resemblance was the more remarkable because a piece of rubber protruded from one end of the lacing. The doctor gave a tentative tug with a pair of tongs at this bit of rubber. Eadie exclaimed.

"It's just pulling on the skin," advised the nurse, "it won't hurt you."

"How do you know?" demanded Eadie. "I tell you I could feel that pulling on my toenails. Hey!"

The doctor had tugged again and a lively stream of blood leaped out of the hole into which the rubber disappeared. The doctor thereupon desisted.

"When do you want him to go?" asked the nurse.

"Let's see. He came in yesterday noon. Let him stay a day or so. Chests and abdomens aren't supposed to be moved immediately."

"No, send me out," requested Eadie. "This place will kill me. Haven't you got a boiler factory somewhere where I can rest in peace?"

"Sorry we can't give you a private room and a special nurse," snapped the doctor with unnecessary sarcasm. "We only handle about two thousand cases a day. Send him out if he wants to go."

The doctor went on to the next case.

They carried away the man in the next bed who had died, the new occupant waiting on his stretcher on the floor while they changed the sheets. The banging doors and the clattering hobnails and the smoke and the shouting men continued, but late in the day stretcher-bearers appeared and brought their weapon alongside Eadie's bed.

"By golly, this is quick work!" said Eadie. "This is the fastest I've moved since I was in the Army!"

"Gotta have the bed," said the orderly shortly. "Lotta wounded men coming in now."

"Put your arms around my neck," said one of the bearers, "and then I'll raise up. Tell me if it hurts you."

"No, I can do it all right," replied Eadie. "Where do we go from here?"

"Hospital train. Take you to the base."

The sergeant, then, hanging on the bearer's neck and moving his feet sidewise, transferred himself from bed to stretcher, two blankets were put over him, and he was borne out of the noisy ward.

A long swaying journey, marked with much grunting on the part of the bearers, and great clattering of board runways under foot, brought them to a dark shed. This must be the loading platform for the hospital trains, for Eadie could hear an engine panting somewhere and the clank and rattle of shifting cars. The stretcher was laid down on some wooden horses, the blankets rearranged, and the bearers left him. The shed was very cold and the stretcher became after a while extremely uncomfortable. Eadie slept a little, hoping to awaken and find himself on the train, but he was still in the same place when he opened his eyes. The brace that held the stretcher open ground into his shoulders. He found that by pulling up his legs and crawling down a way this pressure was relieved, but such a position can not be maintained for any length of time by any one but a snake. If he shoved the other way his head hung down behind. He tried resting his head on a handle of the stretcher. This worked until he dropped into a doze and his head rolled off, nearly breaking his neck. A man went by and to him Eadie called.

"Hey, guy, how long have I got to wait here?"

"Couple of minutes, buddy," said the other over his shoulder, not even pausing to see who had called.

"Couple of minutes! I've been here a couple of hours already!"

"You're right, soldier," said a weak voice. "What the —— are we waiting for here? This is no way to treat a wounded guy! Yuh'd think we was on the town or somethin'."

Eadie turned his head. On the wooden horse beside him was another stretcher on which lay what looked like a snow man. The light in the shed was dim and it was some time before Eadie could make out that this snow man was a man whose head was one mass of bandages. There was a peekhole behind which one might see a rolling eye and a kind of crack out of which came the man's voice.

"What hit you?" gasped the sergeant.

"Nothin' hit me; I hit a house. I was chauffin' for General Parks. I was runnin' with no lights and the road made a curve. There was a house on the other side of the curve."

"What did you do, go through the windshield?"

"Naw, I went through the roof o' the house. I been gettin' a raw deal everywhere cause I got hurt in an accident instead o' bein' wounded."

"I know," said Eadie with sympathy.

The conversation ended there because it was tiring to both men to talk. An electric light was turned on.

"Hey!" cried Eadie, "these —— aren't going to leave us here all night, are they?"

"You said it," husked the former chauffeur.

AND so it was. The sergeant slept, awakened with the cold and a sensation of being broken in two, curled himself up in a ball and slept once more, awakened with pains in cramped legs and his wound burning as though afire. He had put in some terrible nights since he had been in France, but never a worse one than that. It was endless. The third time he awoke a nurse stood beside him.

"Much pain?" she asked.

As a matter of fact Eadie felt quite comfortable that time, but he instantly decided he had been groaning in his sleep and that this nurse would undoubtedly give him a little jolt.

"Yes!" said Eadie.

The nurse thereupon gently lifted the blankets and slyly pinched his leg.

"Be yourself!" said the sergeant. "I'm badly wounded."

"I'm pinching you so that the needle won't hurt," explained the nurse. "If I didn't pinch you'd let out a shriek that would wake up the men in the morgue."

"Ah!" The sergeant saw the light now.

Every time they pinched his leg he had been getting morphine. No wonder he had slept so much.

"I hope I don't get the coke habit out of this," he muttered.

No more until daylight, when some one brought him a bowl of cocoa. It was hot and the sergeant drank it in sips, spilling a good deal down his neck.

"What's the idea in leaving us here?" demanded the sergeant.

"They brought you out for a train," said the man who had brought the cocoa, "and the train got full and there weren't any more. They expected one at two o'clock yesterday an' it didn't show up. Maybe it had a wreck, or maybe the crew got sick of it an' went over the hill. It'll come in, any minute."

"Well, why the —— couldn't they take us back into a ward?" demanded Eadie. "Didn't any one have sense enough for that, or don't they give a ——?"

"Aw it's too bad about you!" replied the orderly with asperity. "You got your junk out of you and all tucked up comfy with nice clean blankets an' still crabbin'! There was fifteen hundred stretcher cases just off the lines that had to stay out in the mud all last night because there wasn't room under a roof for 'em. Think it over!"

"Well, even so," muttered Eadie, "that don't make this barn any warmer nor this stretcher any softer."

The ex-chauffeur began to groan after a while, softly and regularly. Eadie felt like keeping him company, but remembered that the nurse had told him not to. It was, anyway, too great an effort. He could swear that the stretcher brace had worn a hole through the stretcher and his shoulder blades, too. The morning advanced and this time Eadie was unable to doze. He was wide awake, tortured by a thousand aches, and consumed by a burning rage. That his rage was impotent made it all the hotter. There was not even an orderly there to curse out.

Men went by carrying a stretcher. Eadie watched them idly until they had disappeared from his range of vision. Another stretcher went by.

"They're makin' a little more room in the wards," observed the ex-chauffeur huskily, turning his peephole toward Eadie.

"You don't think they've run a train in by any chance, do you?"

"I wouldn't put it past them," said the other.

The stretchers flowed faster and faster until a steady stream of them went by, the bearers treading on one another's heels.

"Hey!" cried Eadie, "how's chances on going out to that train?"

"Take yuh in a minute!" said the bearers.

"Whaddyuh say!" he called again ten minutes later, "take us out, will you?"

"Sure, next trip."

A nurse went swishing by up the aisle, and her Eadie seized in a drowning man's grip.

"Lookit, nurse," said the sergeant, "we've been here, this snowbird and I, since yesterday afternoon. Now they've run in a train and they're bringing the men out of the wards. We'll probably get left again."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the nurse. "I'll fix that. Here, er—you two, these men go out next. I'll sit right here by them to see that you don't forget."

She sat down on the end of the wooden horse and sure enough, in a few minutes, back came four bearers, seized Eadie and the ex-chauffeur and started out with them.

"We're off," cried Eadie. "Well, chauffeur, I'll meet you in Paris."

They went out into the sunlight, down a long platform, and into the big brown car of the hospital train that was drawn up there. It had double doors in the side, like a freight car, for convenience in loading and unloading.

Inside were iron bunks, running along both sides of the car, a double tier. They put Eadie in a lower in the corner, and the ex-chauffeur opposite him in the other lower. Evidently they had been given the last bunks, for seven or eight fully dressed, bareheaded, muddy men were thrust in and the double doors slammed shut.

The dressed men all wore a huge white card hung to the buttons of their overcoats. They looked about them sadly for a few minutes and then sat down upon the floor. Eadie looked at them for some time, grinning happily.

These muddy men were gas cases and not entitled to a bed, but must sit on the floor of the car until the train reached its destination. Eadie wriggled a bit with satisfaction. *He* had a real wound.

In a few few minutes, so few that Eadie felt a chill as he thought of how closely he had come to passing another night in the shed, there was a distant banging of doors, an officer ran down the platform making sure that everything was closed, there was a faint whistle, and an answering toot from the engine.

Crash! A chorus of groans from all. Clank! *Slam!* Another chorus of groans, and the gassed men cursing where they had been flung in a heap. The train took up its flat-wheeled journey.

"By ——!" cried Eadie, "that bird must think he's running a freight! I never had a rougher start even on a 'forty *hommes*' train."

"They said we had an American crew on this train," said some one.

"Yuh might know!" answered a man from an upper bunk. "They pick out the engineers like they do the cooks. They line a bunch they've just caught an' a looey says, 'Count off! Number one is conductor, number two, fireman, and number three, engineer. The rest of yuh is shacks.' "

"What the —— is a shack?" asked some one.

"Brakeman."

"I bet he's right, too," muttered the ex-chauffeur. "But they oughtn't to put these here catch-as-catch-can engineers to runnin' hospital trains."

The train rattled away through the afternoon. There were windows in it, but the lower bunks were below the sill and so Eadie could not look out. The gas cases talked and smoked among themselves, occasionally walking up and down the aisle to stretch their legs.

At the head of Eadie's bunk was a white partition, and opposite it a kind of cubby hole, with a swinging oil-lamp and a sink in it.

In this cubby hole stood the orderly, a young man in O. D. shirt and an overseas cap. The orderly smoked many cigarets and read from a French illustrated paper, the cover of which would be enough evidence in the United States to jail the editor for the rest of his life.

The train stopped on the average of three times an hour, coming to a grinding smashing halt that slid every man against the head of his bunk. A long wait, several false starts, each one marked by a glorious crash as the engineers took up the slack and finally got away with a jerk that threatened to take out every draw-bar by the roots. The wounded groaned and cursed and the train hastened on its way. Eadie judged that it made about fifteen miles an hour on the down grade.

The sergeant discovered after a while that by taking hold of the mesh spring of the upper bunk he could raise himself up and so lessen the pain of the stopping and starting of the train. When the train began to slow down, he would hook his fingers in the meshes and lift himself half out of the bunk.

Here he would hang until the rattle and bang apprised him that the train had stopped. How thankful he was for that custom the French have of tooting the engine whistle before the train moves! When that whistle did its stuff, Eadie again seized the spring and pulled himself from his bunk, just in time to escape the slam that took up the slack, and the jerk that started the train out again.

IT GREW dark after a while and a dim electric light was turned on. When the train went at its full speed, this light was fairly bright, but when the train slackened there was just enough light to show where the bulb was. The orderly came hustling through the car and issued each man a tin plate. Then he appeared with a wash-boiler in which he merrily rattled a gigantic spoon.

"Chow!" he cried, "come an' get it, who wants some chow?"

"What have you got?" asked Eadie.

"Canned willie an' spuds."

"Is that for us?" asked Eadie in surprize.

"Who the —— else?"

"That's no stuff for sick men."

"Lookit, guy, we ain't been to the garage for three trips. Do yuh know that there's lots of American wounded bein' sent out in box cars? You don't know how lucky you are to be on a real hospital train with nurses an' everything. How'd yuh like to be lyin' on the floor o' one o' them forty *hommes*, lookin' through the cracks at the wheels goin' around? No chow in them cars, you bet. Waddyuh want, anyway? Chicken?"

"I could go a bit of soup."

"You could go a bit o' soup." The orderly snorted and mopped his brow with his shirt-sleeve. "Well, there's a nigger in a white coat issues out the soup. When you see a nigger in a white coat come through, ask him for some soup. Maybe he'll bring yuh some champagne with it. Yeh," muttered the orderly, moving off, "when you see any niggers in white coats on this train, you just order up enough champagne to take a bath in."

He went on down the car, rattling his spoon on the sides of the wash-boiler.

The train jerked and banged its

way through the night. Orderlies hurried through the car and the gas cases wandered up and down like lost children. It appeared that an icy draft blew along the floor of the car and no blankets had been provided for those that must sleep thereon. Eadie slept in snatches, rudely awakened each time by the shock of the train's stopping or starting, and the pain of his wound. Toward morning they made a long halt and throughout this Eadie slept heavily. He opened his eyes once, however, to find the car almost dark, a tangled heap by the doors where the gas cases slept like so many snakes all entwined with one another, and a whispering group about the opposite lower. In the morning he learned that the ex-chauffeur had died during the night. He was gone and another already had his bunk.

A second day was a replica of the first, but on the third the passengers began to inquire as to their destination and the probabilities of their arrival thereat.

"We been on this train three days!" declared some one, "an' that's long enough to go from New York to Texas. I bet we're goin' to the Mediterranean."

"We may have been on the train," observed one of the gas patients, who spent all his time looking out the windows, "but we ain't been goin' anywheres. We been standin' on sidings most of the time."

During the third day a nurse made her appearance. She was large and majestic of build and she walked as befitted her physique. This was the first time any one had seen her and her entrance into the car was the signal for a clamor.

"Hey, nurse, where we goin'?"

"Hey, nurse, how much longer we gotta stay on this —— train?"

"Whereat could a man get a few cigarets?"

"Ain't they anything to eat here but canned bill?"

The nurse waved her hand wearily.

"We're going to Nevers, or somewhere near there," she replied. We'll be there pretty soon."

"Where the —— is Nevers—" muttered several.

As the nurse passed his bunk, Eadie reached out his hand and caught her skirt.

"Hey, nurse," he called, "I've got a belly wound and they told me in the hospital not to drink any water. Do you suppose I could now? I'm pretty thirsty."

"Certainly you can drink," she said. "Don't take too much, though, it might make you sick. Here, orderly, give that man a drink."

This last she said over her shoulder. Strangely enough, the orderly did not seem to hear. The nurse had spoken almost into his ear, but he gave no sign. He leaned against the partition of the little cubby-hole with closed eyes, swaying with the movement of the train. He might be asleep. The nurse had gone on, never pausing to see if her command had been obeyed.

Eadie waited a minute or two and then reaching in back of his head, rapped on the partition.

"Whatcha want?" asked the orderly, projecting his head from the cubby-hole.

"How's chances on a drink?"

The orderly's eyes flickered.

"I ain't got no cup right now," said he, "but a guy's gonna bring me some back in a minute."

Eadie lay down again. He had been thirsty for some time, not extremely so, but mildly uncomfortable. Now that he had been told that it would not hurt him to drink, he began to crave water.

His mouth felt as if it were full of sand and a great weariness of mind and spirit began to steal over him, a sort of nagging unrest. Three days on this cursed train! Why, in three days he had gone from Le Corneau to Saint Dizier, diagonally from one corner of France to the other, and that in a freight train full of replacements and casuals, that stopped in every town while the train crew went up to the Café de la Gare and had a few drinks.

Eadie rapped again on the partition.

"How about that drink?"

"Just a minute, ol'-timer, we'll have it."

The minute stretched into several minutes and the sergeant's patience became exhausted. He pounded on the partition, but there was no response. A half an hour later the orderly went down the car. When he returned, Eadie seized his ankle.

"For ——'s sake," he demanded, "are you or are you not going to give me a drink?"

The orderly squatted on his heels by Eadie's bunk.

"Soldier," said he in an embarrassed manner, "I'd like to give yuh a drink. I would, I ain't kiddin' yuh, but to tell yuh the truth, we ain't got no more water on the train."

"No more water!"

"No, we ain't got no more water. But we ought to be in in an hour or so an' they'll put yuh to bed an' you'll be all right. They'll put yuh to bed an' give yuh a shot o' coneyac an' soup an' you'll feel a lot better."

The afternoon darkened into night and the train still crept shudderingly on its way. The nurse was beset with inquiries every time she went through the car, but the wounded were beginning to lose interest.

It was no longer a secret that there was no water to be had, and comment on this fact was bitter. These men were getting worse, they were drifting into the state where life or death mattered very little to them. In fact, there was a slight preference for the latter. Some of the weaker ones died and were put off at way stations in the night, to be buried by details of Annamese labor troops.

Another long night of horror, of noise, and shock. Eadie was delirious at times from thirst and pain, at other times he lay and watched the weaving shadows on the roof of the car. So began the fourth day, but Eadie remembered little of it afterward, save as a terrible nightmare in which he seemed to be falling into unthinkable depths, with many stones that rattled and rattled.

Eadie suddenly realized that a wave of fresh cool air was blowing in his face. His mind cleared at once, as if he had just awakened from sleep. The train had stopped and the air in the car was cool and fresh, with a smell of grass and black rich earth in place of the foul reek of rotten blood and men long unwashed.

They must have opened the big double doors in the center. Sure enough! The train had arrived at last, for the wounded were being carried out. Eadie could hear voices outside the car and some one asking some one else for a match. Presently it was his turn. Two big men in slickers put their stretcher beside the bunk.

"Now, then," said one, "where you hit?"

Eadie tried to tell them, but was startled to find that he had trouble in speaking. The stretcher-men did not show any surprise, doubtless they were well enough acquainted with passengers on hospital trains. The two stretcher-bearers bent over Eadie's tag and then prepared to lift him out of the bunk.

"Now, then," said the man at the head, "put your arms around my neck, old fellar, and just lie limp and we'll have you out in a jiffy."

"Take off his blankets first," said the other man.

"Naw, lift him blankets an' all; he'll be warmer that way. It won't be any harder. Look out, now. All set?"

"All set."

Tenderly they lifted Eadie, then swung him expertly on to the stretcher. The cool wind blew on his face as they bore him out. Shortly he was out in the open air, with a light rain falling in his face and making him blink. He looked up into the hurrying clouds and thought how pleasant the falling mist was and the clean cold wind after the closeness of the hospital car.

The stretcher tilted downward as the bearers went down the runway from the unloading platform, and Eadie had a momentary glimpse of row upon row of low buildings, a wide expanse of barren, muddy fields and a little red-roofed village just visible through the slanting rain. Then the stretcher was leveled out again and set down with a squash in the mud. The bearers stretched themselves, working their bodies backward and forward to take the kink out of their backs, and then sloshed off out of sight.

Eadie tried to raise his head so that he could see where he was, but found that it had suddenly taken on the weight of a cannon ball and so abandoned the attempt. He lay and watched the clouds driving by and let the rain tickle his cheeks and wondered if he would be taken inside before the blankets were quite wet through. For a while he could hear no sounds except the faint calls of the men bringing the wounded out of the train, and the kissing noise of men walking in the mud, and the *sh-sh-sh* of wet slickers. Then he heard voices louder than the rest quite near.

"Now listen, Sergeant, I want two blankets for every one of these men. Two blankets apiece came off the train with them and two blankets apiece I must have to show for those that I'm going to leave here."

"I know that, sir, but we haven't any extra blankets. It's so cold in the wards that all our blankets are on the patients. Couldn't you get more blankets at the garage when you go there?"

Here the first speaker seemed to pray a while, in most unprayerful tones however.

"By this and by that," he said finally, "if I don't get two blankets for every man that came off that train, and see them piled in the cars in fifteen minutes, I'm going to have them off these wounded. I'll be eternally condemned if I'm going to be done out of two months' pay for any nit-wit pill-roller."

There was silence for quite a time, then Eadie heard the whistle of the train and some men tramped past the head of his stretcher.

"We give him his blankets all right," said one, "but he didn't have time to count 'em and they're about a hundred short."

There was a deal of laughter at this and then silence.

Eadie, the cool air blowing upon his hot forehead, closed his eyes. It was quite comfortable here after all, a thousand times better than that cursed train. He was disgusted and enraged to have his rest broken into by more voices, one conciliating, the other wrathful and loud.

"—— it, there's no excuse for leaving these men here in the rain. I don't care what they told you! Here are seriously wounded men, and there are the wards; your duty is plain. Go around and shove all the patients that can stand it into tents. Shove 'em out whether they can stand it or not, but get these men under cover! There's room for 'em somewhere!"

"I know, Colonel," said the conciliating voice, "but there isn't an empty bed in the hospital!"

"Well, you empty some! That will be your job! Meanwhile put these men on the floor, or under the beds, or anywhere to get them under cover. Hold out your hand. Feel that? That's rain. It's wet, just like you are!"

"Oh, no, Colonel, I've got on my slicker!"

"Oh, ——!" choked the loud speaker helplessly. He went pounding vigorously away.

Another journey by stretcher into a queer low-roofed building, like a sectional barrack, only built of brick, with tiny opaque glass windows. The struts of the roof were new and naked, and Eadie, laid down upon the cement floor, found himself in a narrow aisle between two rows of beds. These beds were all decorated with some kind of overhead construction, with weights and pulleys and all sorts of things, like the framework of a skyscraper. This must be a fracture ward and these ropes and scaffolds were for the supporting of injured limbs. A nurse was making up beds.

"Hi!" said Eadie weakly, "how's chances on something to drink?"

The nurse did not seem overjoyed at being interrupted in her work, but she went away and presently returned with a tin cup and a slice of bread and jam. Eadie bit on this bread. It tasted like a mouthful of ashes. That was all he could think of. He could not swallow it. The coffee in the cup he tried, but it was cold and had a frightful taste. He put both bread and cup down beside the stretcher.

A man in a long white coat, evidently a doctor, had been busy with a dressing when Eadie had been carried in. He finished his patient and then came down and looked at Eadie.

"Where did this man come from?" asked the doctor, wrinkling his nose.

"The bearers brought him in."

"Where are you hurt, soldier?"

"In the belly," said Eadie huskily.

"Well, this is a fracture ward. Come on, take this man out of here!"

There was an orderly who had his head over the doctor's shoulder and to him the doctor turned.

"Go get Jacobs and take this man away," he directed.

"Where will we take him to, sir?"

"I don't care where you take him. Get him out of this ward. I'm not going to have him here smelling my ward all up."

"But—"

"Do you understand English?"

The orderly departed and likewise the doctor.

Out into the cold they took the sergeant, there was a great deal of bumping over rough ground, grunting from the stretcher bearers, and finally they entered a tent, a long green affair, that was used to house wards in field hospitals, but which now seemed to contain some of the hospital personnel. The personnel or convalescents, whichever they were, had been sitting about on cots, fully dressed and with their overcoat collars turned up. They began to go away after Eadie had been brought in.

"Who said to bring him in here?" demanded some one, who seemed to be in charge.

"Doctor Lake."

"Why, he's sick; this isn't any place for a man in that shape!"

"Well, you tell the doctor that. He gave us our orders."

"Put him on the bed by the door."

"And move the bed outside," suggested some one.

They transferred the sergeant to a bed near the door. The door was, of course, but a hole in the side of the tent, and the wind and rain drove in. A leg of the bed was broken and the sergeant's feet were higher than his head, while his body sagged toward the corner where the broken leg was. A young man, hardly more than a boy, who was probably the orderly in charge of the tent, came and stood beside the bed.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"Rotten," answered Eadie.

"Want anything to eat?"

"I couldn't eat a thing. How long have I got to stay here?"

"I don't know. This is a convalescent tent. Probably they haven't got any room in the wards."

"Tell me," asked the sergeant, "do I smell a little ripe?"

"Yes," said the orderly soberly, "you do."

"I haven't had my wound dressed for five days," said Eadie, "and it's a belly wound, too. I suppose it is a little high, but I don't notice it myself."

"I'm going over to the office," said the orderly energetically, "and tell them to look after you. There's a mistake somewhere. I'll be right back."

While he was gone Eadie began to suffer. A man's nerve breaks down after a while under the stress of pain as it does under the stress of battle. It was bitter cold in that tent and the sergeant was chilled. He was soaking wet from the rain or the discharges of his wound. His position was decidedly uncomfortable, for he was on a sharp slope and kept slipping inch by inch, so that he feared eventually he would fall off the bed on to the grass.

THE orderly returned, but he had no news for the sergeant. The men in the tent went to dinner, they returned and smoked cigarets, then some of them went away announcing their intention of going to town and seeing the sights. The orderly sent twice to the office and went again himself without result. Eadie suffered terribly.

A long time after dinner, when it was already growing dark, a fat man appeared with two stretcher bearers.

"Where's the sick man?" he called in a hearty voice.

Eadie scarcely felt himself being placed on the stretcher, nor the swaying and jolting of the journey to the ward. A real ward they brought him to, a brick walled, opaque-windowed place like the fracture ward, but the beds were without the overhead framework. They slid the sergeant into a bed in a corner, covered him up and left him.

The ward was a quiet, comfortable sort of place. There was no noise such as there had been in the evacuation hospital, no cigaret smoke, no movement. Overhead Eadie could see the rough boards of the roof, full of cracks and knot-holes. His was the last bed on the left side of the ward and beyond him was an open room, containing a large wooden table, some kerosene stoves, and piles of dressings under glass cases. Across the aisle was a solid brick partition, with a half-open door opening onto the aisle.

This was probably an office. The walls were of cement for a distance of two or three feet from the ground, and above that naked brick. There was no sign of any arrangement for heating.

It was a bare enough place, thought Eadie, but he was here for a while and would not have to make any more journeys by hospital train. The roof had cracks in it, through which one could see tar paper, but it at least kept out the rain.

The bed might be hard or it might be soft, he was no judge. It was softer than the ground, and a man could sleep in it with never a thought of shell or bomb or slinking raiding party hunting for throats to cut. Well, he was glad he had arrived. Things might be a little rough at first, but they always straightened out.

The sergeant felt really at peace with the world. Solid comfort, that was what he was enjoying, for the first time since he had been in the army. Let reveille be at five-thirty tomorrow, or at noon, he did not care, he would not have to go.

Let the war rage and the big shove succeed or fail, he was out of it for the winter. No guard to stand, no horse to worry about, no infantry to find, no officers to bedevil him, no enlisted men to see how much they could get away with. All over. Jake appeared and sat down upon the opposite bunk, where he lined his jaws with snuff and producing a plug of tobacco, bit off a piece.

"I haven't seen you do that since we were on the transport," said Eadie.

Jake made no reply, but got to his feet and turned back Eadie's blankets with his hairy hand.

"Here!" cried Eadie. "What do you think you're going to do?"

"I'm going to dress your wound," said Jake.

"You'll play —— dressing my wound, you big jughead!" cried Eadie, struggling to yell the way men do in dreams. "I wouldn't let you put iodine on a boil!"

Jake, however, continued his arranging of the blankets. Eadie, turning his head, discovered that there was a nurse on the other side of the bed, holding a great basin, and this nurse was abetting Jake.

"Are you all drunk?" cried Eadie. "Don't you see that this man isn't competent to do a dressing? God knows he knows as much about being a doctor as some I've seen since I've been in the Army, but that's no reason he's fit to undo all my stitching."

The bandages and a number of pillow-like pads were removed from Eadie's middle and Jake, skilfully enough, was washing off the sergeant's stomach. Then he flourished a pair of tongs and Eadie, watching as if he were another man, saw the tongs take out a long section of rubber hose, a yard or so of gauze, and then a great number of balls of cotton. In would go the long tongs, in to the hilt, and out they would come with a roll of cotton in their jaws. Eadie was fascinated. There must be some kind of magic here.

"Listen, Jake," he said finally, "let me see you take a rabbit out of there."

"If you were a well man," said Jake gruffly, "I'd slap your jaws for you."

"You'll make little ones out of big ones for the next couple of years if you make a pass at me. I'm a sergeant, sick or well, and don't forget it for a minute."

Jake irrelevantly began to roll dice on Eadie's stomach, rolling them around and around, but never calling his point. The nurse watched the procedure calmly.

"I thought you were dead, Jake," said Eadie. "Where have you been goldbricking so long?"

"You'll never know," replied Jake. He removed his rubber gloves, put on a cap, and began to fumble in his pocket for a cigaret.

"They did a poor job on you up there," he continued. "When that stops suppurating I'll cut it open again and do a better one."

"You'll play ——!" said Eadie with energy.

Jake made no reply, but went away, rubbing his freckled hands as if to warm them. The nurse who had assisted him replaced Eadie's blankets.

The ward was warm, quiet, restful. The sergeant felt sleep stealing over him, a complete perfect restfulness such as he had never known before. He did not want to sleep, however; he wanted to stay awake and enjoy the sensation. That drunken Jake, having the nerve to dress a man's wounds! Well, hospital was a soft place to be after all. Better than spending the winter up there in the cold mud.

"How do you feel, soldier?"

Eadie turned. There was another nurse smiling at him, one he had not seen before, but the thing that astonished him most was that she was attractive, not to say beautiful. He had not thought there were any young and pretty nurses in France. He had never seen any before.

"Great!" answered the sergeant, "except that my feet are cold."

"I'll fix that," said the nurse. "Would you like an egg nog?"

"I'll say I would!"

"Leave it to me!" smiled the nurse.

She was back in a few minutes, with a basket full of hot water bottles. These she shoved against various parts of the sergeant's frame, then she whisked away again, to return with the egg nog. It tasted good and Eadie would have downed it at one gulp, but the nurse would not let him. She supported him on her shoulder and made him sip it.

"I'm a good-looking guy if I have a shave once a month or so," observed the sergeant. The nurse laughed merrily and the egg nog having all disappeared, she had one of his feet off the hot water bottle and began to massage it with expert hands.

"You needn't go trying to pull my leg," said Eadie, "I haven't been paid for eight months."

Again the nurse laughed. She rubbed and kneaded, stopped to take the sergeant's pulse and then began on the other leg. Eadie's feet began to tingle and his legs to hurt. His feeling of deep comfort began to melt away and changed into one of irritation and unrest. His wound began to ache and each time that the nurse rubbed her hand on him, it shoved him a bit, and the stitches tugged on him like so many fish-hooks. He began to feel as though he had been broken into fifty parts.

"Hey, lay off, will you?" he finally demanded irritably. "I felt all right until you started to monkey around. You're making me sick!"

"Am I?" cried the nurse joyfully. "Do you feel rotten? Good!"

"Good? How come? Good? Say maybe you don't think I've got a bad wound. Read my card!"

But the nurse was gone after a fresh set of hot water bottles.

Eadie raged and pleaded alternately. His wound began to pain him terribly. He discovered that the ward, after all, was cold as ice, that some men were playing cards at the far end of it, talking loudly, that a man a few beds away was whistling. A door somewhere kept slamming and he could hear the rattling of pans.

"Lay off!" cried Eadie. "For ——'s sake leave me alone! I was all set to go to sleep and you've got me stirred up so that I won't sleep for a month!"

"You were set for a good long sleep," replied the nurse, "but you don't know how long it was going to be. Now! I've got a pulse started on you and you've begun to take an interest in life. I'll pour a bowl of hot soup down you and see if that doesn't make you a little more amiable."

The soup went down, but it only increased Eadie's disgust with things in general. The man a few beds away still whistled.

"Say, cut out that —— whistling!" yelled the sergeant, making a great effort.

The whistling stopped.

"Who the —— told you you owned the ward?" demanded the whistler.

He nevertheless whistled no more.

"Who's that bellyachin'?" asked some one.

"Aw, it's that guy in Number One," replied the whistler. "He's got appendicitis an' he thinks he's got a right to go bellerin' around at real wounded men."

CHAPTER X

FURTHER TREATMENT OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

THERE was no monotony in hospital life in that hospital. Eadie slept most of the first week, but after that he began to take a livelier interest in everything. Reveille was at seven o'clock every morning, and consisted of an orderly's appearing beside a man's bed and pounding upon a wash basin.

When the man awoke, he was given a basin full of water and allowed to wash himself. When the task was completed, the orderly went to the next bed and repeated the operation. Breakfast was at eight—a bowl of cream of wheat with a spoonful of molasses, also one mug of black fluid called coffee. There was sometimes evidence that rodents had been nibbling at the breakfast food, but then, as the head nurse remarked, a man was not compelled to eat it. If he wanted to leave it and wait for dinner, nothing would be said.

There were fifty-two beds in the ward, with three nurses. The head nurse fought with the other nurses and with the patients all day, the second nurse—it was she who had taken care of Eadie the first day—made the beds, washed the patients, took temperatures, swept the floor, and made herself useful. The third nurse was the doctor's assistant. She went around with the butcher's cart every morning and was busy all afternoon making pads and dressings for the next day. The personnel of the hospital were boys from some Eastern college. Some old grad had addressed a mass meeting at the college and asked for volunteers for a unit that was to go immediately overseas. What the unit was to be he did not say. It went overseas, too, and "took over" this nice new base hospital. The boys found that their part in the war was to perform menial tasks for wounded men, and since they could not revenge themselves on the men who had lured them into the Army, they took it out on the patients.

After breakfast the slam of a door and a hurried, irritated voice asking whether everything was ready, announced the arrival of the doctor. Then would come creaking of wheels and a rattling of glassware.

The butcher's cart, a rubber-wheeled affair bearing instruments, dressings, and various utensils for the catching of blood or the bathing of wounds would appear, shoved by an orderly. The doctor would put on his rubber gloves, be tied into his apron by the nurse, and proceed with the dressing of the wounds.

Eadie, being in Number One bed, was always the first victim. The other members of the ward watched and waited. There was no merriment, no interest in anything but the approach of the doctor, and when any man groaned or cried out, every one in the ward trembled in sympathy. They knew they would get theirs in turn. Eadie usually gave them something to think about, for he had a deep wound, into which a pair of tongs a foot long was plunged again and again, and moreover the doctor had never forgiven him for the things he had said the first afternoon, when Eadie, semi-delirious, had thought the doctor was Jake. The doctor bore no resemblance to Jake except that he smoked incessantly.

The dressings were all changed by dinner time, which meal usually consisted of bully beef and boiled potatoes, or soup for the liquid diets. Day after day the same things, varied by prunes or canned apricots for dessert, on Wednesdays and Sundays. In the afternoon the patients slept, or read, or visited with each other. For supper beans and canned tomatoes, or corned beef hash—canned—and canned tomatoes. The lights went out at nine o'clock and the patients could sleep.

Ah! they could sleep, but—! A man named Carrell and another named Dakin had invented a fluid that kept a wound from suppurating and assisted granulation. This fluid must be injected into the wound every two hours night and day, by means of a number of rubber tubes that remained permanently in the wound. In the daytime it was not bad, but in the cold darkness of the winter night—the nights are very cold in France, even in summer—the man had to be dragged from sleep every two hours and this liquid injected. It could not be warmed, for that would destroy its properties. Eadie had four tubes in him, but some men had eight or ten, even more. When the orderly or nurse awakened them they would swear terribly, cry out at the bite of the icy Dakin, then drift to sleep again to be aroused two hours later for the same performance.

The night orderly was a man who made up for all the deficiencies of his fellows. A faint whisper, "Orderly," and he was there at the bedside. He had bought himself felt slippers to deaden the sound of his footsteps on the floor. If a man felt ragged during the night, or was suffering, or thirsty, or cold, or just lonely and homesick, the orderly was there to do what he could.

He brought up food from the officers' ward for the seriously ill, not telling that he had begged this food for himself from his brother, who was orderly in the officers' ward. He wrote letters, he shaved, he smuggled in wine, always patient, always smiling, always working. Every man in the ward harbored two ambitions, two projects for the day when he was a well man.

One was to beat the day orderly into a red mush and the other to give the night orderly the best drunk he had ever had in his life.

The really interesting time began after Eadie could sit up. The first day he sat up a minute, the second ten, and by the end of a week he could sit up for a whole morning. He began then to make acquaintances. His name, he found, was Number One, the men in the ward being designated by the number of their beds. There was a man a little way down the ward called The Regular, another the Marine, an Italian who had lost his leg was called Garibaldi. There was a man known as Forty whose voice Eadie had learned to recognize during the weeks when the sergeant had lain on his back. There were also four German prisoners in the ward, all badly wounded. There was no love lost between the Americans and the Germans. The latter had no friend but the head nurse, who spoke to them cheeringly, and went out of her way to be agreeable to them. She was perhaps strengthened in this course by the outspoken disgust with which the Americans regarded it.

A morning arrived, then, some time after Eadie had been sitting up, when he really felt at peace with the world. The breakfast, having less caraway seed in it than usual, he had eaten a hearty meal and so felt the need of tobacco.

He regarded his watch. Five minutes of eight. A man was not allowed to smoke before eight o'clock, but what were three or four minutes? He selected a cigaret from a package his friend the nurse had given him and lighted it. A long drag and a cloud of smoke rolled out into the aisle. There was a swish of skirts.

"Ah!" said the head nurse in a tone of satisfaction, "I caught you, didn't I?"

"Yup," agreed the sergeant, puffing, "two minutes of eight."

The outside door banged then, announcing the arrival of the doctor, so she went out with no more ado. Eadie dragged on the cigaret.

'I bet she turns you in for that," announced the Regular grimly.

"Aw, no," answered the sergeant, "she isn't so bad as you birds try to make out. She never did anything rough to me and she wouldn't to you if you didn't bellyache every time she says, 'Good morning' to those jerries."

No one said anything, but one or two laughed a little. Then the office door slammed and the doctor seemed to leap at Eadie. Behind him was the head nurse. Two jumps and they were at the foot of the sergeant's bed.

"You were smoking this morning before hours, weren't you?" yelled the doctor. "Don't lie, the nurse saw you. What did you do it for? Never mind. Don't you smoke again while you're in this ward. Not once. If you do, I'll have you out of that bed and on the rockpile. Understand?"

"Yessir," said the sergeant meekly.

The doctor turned abruptly and went back into the office. The nurse followed him. There was a low murmur of laughter from all the other beds.

"You're getting better," said the Regular.

"That's right," boomed Number Forty from down the ward, "the first sign of recovery in this ward is to have a fight with the head nurse."

"Yeh, she turned in Roarin' Forty yesterday to the O. D. for somethin'—talkin' back about the chow, I guess."

"Wha'd they do to you, Forty?" asked some one.

"I don't know yet. I'm goin' to get a trial when I get better. They ought to give me a vote of thanks."

"What did he say?" Eadie inquired of the ward in general.

"Ha-ha!" replied several at once. "He said he wanted some more jam. You know *him*. He bellyached till she come down the ward and wanted to know what he was yellin' about. 'I want some more jelly,' he says. 'Ain't no more,' she says. 'I didn't have enough to put in my eye,' he says. 'Too much jam ain't good for yuh,' she says, 'this ward gets too much, that's why the men in it are such softies.' 'The ward don't get a —— of a lot,' he says, 'because one orderly an' the head nurse can eat up a whole issue of it, an' have often.' Then she goes for the O. D."

"It's true, too," yelled Forty. "I've seen 'em. When they had me in that little room to die I could look out through the door into the kitchen. An' the orderlies scoffin' the light diets' chicken Sunday nights."

"Chicken? What do you mean chicken?" demanded Eadie. "When do they have chicken here?"

"Aw, this was before your time," said the Regular. "We didn't have it so bad here till all you *hombres* started runnin' around gettin' yourselves shot up in them Oregon woods."

"Naw, it ain't so!" cried some one else, "because after Shatter Theery we didn't get nothin' to eat here for months but bully beef right out the can. I *know!* We didn't have no pajamas, neither. The guys were all lyin' around raw."

The butcher's cart approached with a rattle and the dressings began. They seemed to be more hurried than usual. There was a tiny stove about a foot in diameter that heated the ward, the water for the men's baths, the water for washing and the water for dressings.

The top of it always bore a bucket and this bucket belonged to the first that removed it. Since the surgical nurse wanted it for dressings and the old Frenchwoman that washed dishes wanted it for that, and the ward nurse wanted it for baths, there were always two disappointed and harsh words passed.

Eadie had early made friends with the Frenchwoman, since he could speak French, and when the head nurse wanted to give instructions for the day to Annie, as the Frenchwoman was known in the ward, she did it through Eadie. He was tempted several times to translate literally the woman's remarks to the head nurse, but he desisted. It would have meant the loss of her job to Annie and a probable trial for the sergeant.

On this morning, however, the surgical nurse, instead of sneaking up quietly and rushing upon the bucket, came down the aisle holding Annie by the hand, and directed the Frenchwoman to take the hot water first.

"What's going on?" asked Eadie, as Annie went by the foot of the bed.

"Ah," replied Annie, "There's going to be an inspection. A general. I wish I could speak English, I'd tell the general what a *salotte* he has for a head nurse."

"What's the idea in giving you the bucket first?" asked Eadie. "They afraid you'll *musique* on 'em?"

"No, they want me to get the dishes all washed up before the general comes," answered Annie, displaying her three teeth. "She—*andouille* that she is—is going to give me three well men to help."

"I bet that gets to be a habit with her," muttered the sergeant. "I'm glad I'm sick."

The dressings were hurried through with, the orderly frantically swept the floor until one could hardly see for the dust, the beds were straightened and the head nurse sat down breathlessly to wait for the inspector.

He arrived suddenly, accompanied by several other officers, slammed open the door, and followed by his staff or guides or assistants, or what-not, he walked through the ward as fast as a man might without actually running.

He glanced quickly to right and left as he walked along and was probably one of those who can tell at a glance whether everything is in its proper place, for one glance was all he gave.

Before the men in the ward had really time to draw a second breath he was gone and the door at the far end of the ward slammed behind him. The head nurse, who had trotted in his wake, turned with a sigh of relief.

"Hey," yelled the Regular, coming to his senses now that it was too late, "call that bird back here. I want to tell him I ain't gettin' enough to eat!"

"That's right!" called some more, "where's the fire?" He went through here like he'd just heard pay-day blown. How come we ain't got no sheets? It's gettin' tiresome sleepin' between scratchy blankets."

"I don't give a —— about the blankets," yelled some man the length of the ward, "food is what I want. Nobody gets anything to eat in this ward but the jerry prisoners and I want some one should know of it!"

"All of you shut up!" said the nurse vehemently. "If any of you had yelled at the inspector you would have regretted it, I assure you! That means you! And you, too! Soldiers! I never saw such children in my life! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! I don't want to hear any more remarks about the prisoners, either! Suppose *you* were prisoners, yourselves! Don't forget that there are a lot of roads to be built around here and that for men that claim they're too sick to build roads there are convalescent tents to sleep in. It's not very warm out in those tents either! Now not another word out of you two!"

She glared at the Regular and the man who had yelled so loudly, then she swung suddenly about and walked quickly to the bedside of Roaring Forty.

"And I don't want a word out of you, either!" she snapped.

"I didn't say anything," protested Forty.

"Well, I don't want you to, either."

"That so? Well now I could if I felt like it!" cried Forty.

"Well, you'd better not feel like it," brandishing her fist in Forty's face.

"I didn't say anything all this time," yelled Forty, "but I will now! There's fifty-two Americans in this ward that are getting a raw deal, and you hanging round the prisoners all the time. A month ago those birds were trying to kill us! If it wasn't for them or some like 'em we wouldn't be here. What the ——! Why don't you mooch a little chow out of the officers' ward for us an' give the jerries what we get to eat? An' you rubbin' that —— Hun down with alcohol every night! There's Number One, with his belly all slit open like a herrin's an' he ain't had a bath since before the drive started. How long's he been in the ward? Three weeks!"

"All right," said the head nurse, controlling herself with difficulty, "I'll get you a chance to talk to the general that you won't like. The general that you'll see will be general court-martial!"

She stalked vigorously away down the ward, her hair flying. At Eadie's bed she paused.

"Is that true that you haven't had a bath since you came in off the field?" she demanded.

"Yes, it's true," replied Eadie.

"Well, why didn't you ask for one? Have I got to follow you up like a child? The day nurse is hanging around you all the time, why don't you ask her? I'll bet you weren't so particular about a bath before you came in the Army!"

"I asked her," said Eadie, "but I can't take a bath in cold water, can I? These men have to shave and by the time Annie has got her dishes washed and a few gold-brick nurses have filled up their hot water bottles, it's too late for a bath. It takes half a day for a bucket of water to lose its chill, let alone getting warm!"

The head nurse tightened her lips and left without replying.

"She's gone for the O. D.," said the Regular. "She must be a popular old bird up around the officers' mess. She's always draggin' some one out o' there just at dinner time to come down here and bawl us out."

THE O. D. arrived, sure enough, and held a long conversation with Forty. The O. D. explained that it was unchivalrous to be rude to a woman, that the hospital was overcrowded, its personnel was new and unaccustomed to its duties, that food was very short in France, and all the best of it must naturally be sent up to the lines for the combat troops. He furthermore announced that he did not care to tramp half a mile from the officers' quarters to the ward to calm obstreperous soldiers very often, and that if he was called again, the obstreperous man would be shifted from the ward to a cold convalescent tent, regardless of his condition. The head nurse stood by and listened with satisfaction.

"There now," exclaimed the head nurse after the O. D. had gone, "watch yourselves. Any freshness or any remarks about the prisoners and out you go." On her way back to the office she paused by Eadie's bed. "That goes for you, too," she said. "If I catch you smoking again, out in the cold for you."

"It might be worth it," answered the sergeant. "I might get the treatment a seriously wounded man is entitled to out there."

"Seriously wounded?" cried the head nurse, "you gold-brick! All you've got is an incision hardly as big as an appendectomy. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for staying in hospital with it! Look at Number Ten with his leg full of tubes, and the Marine there, six months in bed from a bayonet through the body! Seriously wounded! Who said you were? Look at Featherstone, with his back blown off right down to the ribs. He hasn't turned over or lifted an arm since June! See that man in Twenty-eight bed? He hasn't got any face, but they're making him a new one out of his own hand. See his hand up to his jaw? The palm is growing on to the place where his cheek ought to be, and every six weeks they cut his hand away and stick it on in a new place! That man's got a wound! You don't hear him complaining, do you?"

"I would if I could talk, you old ——!" mumbled the man whose hand was growing to his face.

The nurse turned with an exclamation and they heard her running down the corridor.

"Run fast," roared Forty, "you'll catch the O. D. before he gets out of sight!"

The ward rocked with laughter.

From then on there was war to the knife between the head nurse and the patients. If she caught any one smoking before or after the allowed time, even so much as a minute, he lost his smoking privilege.

Men were ruthlessly sent out to convalescent tents long before they were in fit condition to stand the damp cold of a winter in the open.

From this there was no escape, for trains full of wounded came in twice a week, and those who had recovered somewhat from their hurts must make way for the newly stricken. The head nurse was the one who decided and it was noticeable that her few friends, no matter how nearly recovered they were, stayed on in the ward while others less able went out.

The most flagrant case among the friends of the head nurse was a boy of nineteen or so, known as Irish. Poor lad, he had been brought up by his grandmother and had never slept away from home until the draft caught him and swept him away to France. He had a flesh wound in the arm received in an air raid a hundred kilometers or so behind the lines, after he had been only three weeks in France. Week after week Irish stayed in the ward and other men went out to the tent. No one cared very much, for the poor boy would excite pity in any breast, but one day the orderlies took Forty out of bed and carried him to a tent.

The next morning Irish was gone and Forty was in his bed in the ward. Irish might have walked out, but who had carried Forty in again? There was what is known in Army circles as a "stink" about the affair, but Forty stayed in the ward and the men counted it a victory over the head nurse.

She had her revenge later, for diphtheria broke out in the hospital and every one in the ward received an injection of antitoxin. The men suffered frightfully, the place resounded with groans like those from a torture chamber. The antitoxin was injected in the stomach and caused the most excruciating pain in about an hour. The head nurse was highly amused and walked up and down chuckling.

"Well, well," she exclaimed, "I thought you were soldiers. I haven't heard such a racket since I was in charge of a baby ward."

The wounded ground their teeth.

The signing of the Armistice caused little commotion. A girl from the Red Cross entered the ward one day and announced that the war was over. Few of the men believed it and the rest took no interest one way or the other. The war was over for them, anyway, and had been for some time.

"We'll be sorry the war is over yet," prophesied Forty. "We'll get less work out of 'em now than ever."

He was right. The personnel, the night of the Armistice, all left the hospital to take care of itself and went to the nearest town to celebrate. In the days that followed, they expected that they would be sent home immediately and vented their feelings of disappointment on the patients. Eadie's friend, the nurse who had saved his life the first day he had been in the ward, got herself transferred to another ward where the head nurse was less disagreeable.

The closing of the field and evacuation hospitals and the arrival of fresh personnel from home allowed more nurses to the ward, but there was less work done than before. The nurses at the field hospitals felt they had done their bit by working two and three days at a stretch without rest and that now the war was over they had a right to rest.

The newly arrived nurses did not agree with this view, and since no one else did any work, did not see why they should. Meanwhile the wounded died.

"By ——," cried the Regular one morning, "a week from today is Thanksgiving Day. I wonder if we get any turkey."

"Yep," spoke up a man, "it says in the *Stars and Stripes* that there'll be a turkey for every man in the A. E. F. I was just readin' it. It says they come over from the States in refrigerator ships, one for each of us, with fixin's."

"The best reason for not believin' that," remarked Forty, "is that you seen it in the *Stars and Stripes*."

"Hey, Orderly," called Eadie, "what do you know about it? Do you see any signs of turkey around the hospital?"

"I don't know," said the orderly. "I'll ask the mess sergeant at dinner. The detachment commander made us a spiel Sunday and said that we were going to have turkey with all the fixings, but he told us about twice a week all last summer that we were going up to the front in ten days, so it's hard to believe him now."

"Well, speakin' of turkey," remarked Forty, "see if you could find me a duck."

Three days after, a convalescent who had come into the ward to visit a friend was prevailed upon to pay a visit of reconnaissance to the hospital kitchen. He returned with the glorious statement that the place was full of turkeys and that the cooks' police were busy unpacking them and preparing them for the big day.

"I don't believe it yet," said Eadie. "I've always played in hard luck on getting big feeds since I've been in the Army. When we were at Camp Shelby a year ago, our mess sergeant ran off with all the battery funds and we had to eat what the quartermaster issued us. It didn't include turkey either. Then at Christmas I was in hospital on liquid diet."

"Me, too," agreed another man. "When I get that turkey right in my hand I'll believe it."

"Naw, but I tell yuh I seen the birds bein' fixed up," protested the scout. "They were makin' stuffin' an' everything."

"That might be," said the other, "but they might be gettin' 'em ready for the nurses, or for the doctors, or for the officers' ward."

The Red Cross functioned well in that hospital. They furnished most of the bandages and dressings and every so often a girl would visit the wards and give every man a piece of home-made fudge. One piece was not much, but it was all the sugar the wounded got and they were pleased enough.

Thanksgiving morning an orchestra visited each ward, under the auspices of the Red Cross, and rendered appropriate music. The orchestra was composed of a flute, a violin, and a bull fiddle, all local talent, and they could only play two pieces, both of rather a doleful nature, but they were well received by the inmates of the ward.

The wounded were looking forward to dinner and anything that served to pass the time was welcome. Would they or would they not have turkey for dinner? The head nurse informed those that questioned her that she had other things on her mind than what the men would eat for dinner, the orderly declared that he had seen turkeys being dressed, and that the personnel were planning on a turkey dinner, but as to whether or not the men in the ward would get turkey, he did not know.

Eadie intended to ask his nurse friend, but she had not paid him a visit for some time and so he had not been able to.

At twelve the orderly put away his broom and left for the kitchen. The food was brought from the kitchen to the ward in a huge tray containing covered dishes. This food was then portioned out in the ward kitchen and served to the men.

"Who wants to bet me we get canned willie?" demanded Forty.

"No, sir," announced an unseen speaker, "we're goin' to have turkey. I'd bet you but I ain't been paid since July an' I ain't liable to be with my organization till next July so I won't draw no money until then. I tell yuh what I'll do though. I'll bet yuh my share o' the bully beef that we have turkey. If we have bully, you can have my share."

"An' if we have turk you can have mine? Fat chance. Heads I win, tails you lose."

"Aw shut up, you two!" growled the Regular. "What's the use of gettin' all het up? If we have turk we have it an' if we don't we'll be mad enough without gettin' our mouth all set for it. I don't believe we'll get it. There's two million *soldados* in France an' ther' ain't that many turks in the world. If there was, they'd have to have a fleet o' transports to bring 'em over in."

The outside door banged. The men heard the hurrying step of the orderly in the corridor, heard him enter the ward kitchen, and the slam of the food tray on the table. Scrape, scrape went a spoon.

The orderly appeared again, a plate in each hand. A happy cry burst from every throat. There was turkey on each plate, turkey, brown and inviting, flanked by the white of mashed potato and the red of cranberry sauce. But how come? Eadie, being in Number One bed, and so nearest the door, should be served first, and the man opposite him next. That was the usual order, but this time the orderly bore those steaming dishes down the ward and gave them to two men at the far end. There was a heavy silence. The orderly went back to the ward-kitchen, two more plates of turkey appeared, one going to a German prisoner and the other to a notorious gold-brick, a friend of the head nurse. Murmurs from the other men in the ward. Two more plates of turkey, to two men recently arrived.

"What's the grand idea in not serving us in order?" demanded Eadie finally.

"Bring yours in next," said the orderly. True to his word he did.

The eyes of every man in the ward were on the end of the corridor, and they followed the plate from the time the orderly appeared until he put it down beside some one's bed, then their eyes followed him out of sight again. Every man saw the orderly appear with Eadie's plate, every man, save those already eating, looked to see what was on it. Whatever it was, it was not turkey. Eadie's shout of anger told them what he had received.

"Canned asparagus and beans!"

The man opposite Eadie received the same thing, so did the next man. The Regular, the Marine, Forty, all the other men in the ward, asparagus, cold and tasteless, and the old Army standby, canned beans. There was a roar of protest that swelled louder as each man was served.

The head nurse came in and commanded silence, but could not make herself heard above the uproar. Forty descended from his bed, and dragging himself along from one cot to the next, was about to assault a German prisoner, when the orderly and the nurse restrained him and hustled him back to bed again. Every one talked at once, some wept tears of rage, others howled with impotent wrath, some hurled their plates crashingly to the cement floor, beans and all. Finally they quieted down, for they were sick men after all, and had not a great deal of endurance.

"What's the matter with you men?" demanded the head nurse when she could make herself heard, "are you all crazy? What do you mean by breaking those plates? What do you mean by yelling like this? I never heard of such a thing in my life! You, Forty, you've got enough chalked up against you already to keep you in the guard house the rest of your life! Number One, you're always starting something, you're at the bottom of this! You were the first man served! I'll report you for this! What do you mean by making such a row?"

"I've got a right to make a row!" replied Eadie hotly, ready to weep bitter tears in disappointment and rage. "What the —— do you mean by giving turkey to the prisoners and your bootlicking, camouflaging pets and putting out beans to the rest of us? By ——, if you were a man I'd get right up out of this bed and take a round out of you, I don't care if my guts fell out and hung down around my feet!"

"Is that what the trouble is?" asked the head nurse. She laughed a little rippling laugh and the ward ground its teeth at the sound. "The prisoners and my gold-bricking friends get turkey and the rest of you don't? But you men are all on light diet. It's only the men on full diet that get turkey."

Ah, so that was it! Oh, bitter peeve! How well they remembered now, those men, that the nurse had transferred this one and that one from full to light diet during the past week. There had been no complaint because the full diets ate heartily of bully beef, hard tack and canned hash, while the light diets had delicacies like canned asparagus, jam, and stewed chicken on Sunday night. But now! Only the full diets to have turkey! Wrath and foam. The men in the ward could hear the head nurse strangling with laughter in the office.

Eadie lay down in his bed and covered his head with the blankets. His plate lay on the bedside table untouched, while his heart burned within him. What did a man get for going to war? What did it get him to risk his life in battle? If he was killed, a hasty burial, and if he was wounded, a trip to a hell like this hospital. He had been treated much better the time he had been gassed, than now that he was seriously wounded. Seriously wounded!

"What's the matter with you, appendicitis?"

"Gold-brick, you haven't got any kind of a wound. Suppose you lost a leg or an arm!"

He was one man in a ward of fifty-odd seriously wounded, and the ward was one in not only a hospital, but a concentration of five similar hospitals huddled in the cold mud of one of the most desolate sections of France. If he died he went to the morgue and if he lived and got well he would go out and spend the winter in a convalescent tent.

A hand tugged gently at the blankets about Eadie's head. He put out one eye and discovered his friend the nurse there, the one who had taken such good care of him when he first came to the ward.

"I've been sick," said the nurse, "that's why I haven't been around to see you before. What's the matter, aren't you feeling well?"

"No!" replied Eadie, "the head nurse put us all on light diet so we wouldn't get any turkey dinner. I don't mind a lot, because I was on light diet, anyway, but it makes me mad to have a plate of beans shoved at me when I had my mouth all set for turkey."

"That old devil!" muttered the nurse. "If I ever meet up with that disgusting woman after the war or somewhere where there aren't any witnesses, I'll certainly give her a piece of my mind and maybe haul out a few of her hairs for her! What a dirty trick! Sometimes I wonder if she isn't deranged."

"Well, hurray for Thanksgiving Day, anyway. Maybe I'll get a good dinner for Christmas."

"Now, there!" exclaimed the nurse. "I forgot what I came over here for. I was up in the office this morning and I saw an order they were getting out. Your name was on it."

"What for?" demanded Eadie in surprize. "What are they putting my name on an order for?"

"You're going back to the States on the first trainload that goes!"

"No! Is that a fact?" cried Eadie.

"It certainly is," said the nurse, "I saw the order myself."

Eadie at once sat up in bed.

"Hey, orderly!" he cried, "who told you to take away that dish of beans? Bring it back! I can make out a meal with it now!"

The sergeant's recovery after that was

rapid. His friend the nurse had predicted that it would be, for a belly wound either killed a man or he recovered from it, one or the other, and it took very little time for either. The tubes were removed from the wound in a few days and after he could sleep all night he rapidly gained strength. He had to learn to walk all over again like a child, but he had plenty of time.

The week before Christmas he was still in the ward, with every prospect of not leaving it for anything better than a convalescent tent. He had been issued a uniform, such as it was, but he had his collar ornaments and his whistle, and his faithful friend the nurse bought him a set of sergeant's stripes and two very glittering wound stripes. Two! There weren't many that could sport two.

One morning Eadie finished his breakfast and was in the midst of his bi-weekly shave when the head nurse came fluttering up to his bed.

"Hurry up and get that finished and get ready to get out of here!" she said.

"Are you going to run me into a tent?" asked the sergeant with a sinking heart.

"No, you're going to leave the hospital. Go up to the office."

The ward was very quiet while the nurse informed three more men that they were going. Four men, that was all, and the rest of them must wait another month or so. There was no laughter. The men watched sadly while Eadie did his packing. This consisted of wiping his face and his razor, putting the razor in his musette, and taking his overcoat over his arm. He traveled light. Then he went down the ward to say his farewells.

They looked at the sergeant pathetically, for he was going home, and they were doomed to stay in the ward and fight withthe head nurse. Two weeks from now Number One would be at home in the States, at home where it was warm, and a man might eat thick steak three times a day if he so willed. Two weeks from now Number One would be in civilian clothes and need never look at a uniform again. He would be among people who were all "mister," where if a man was insulted there was nothing to hinder him from poking the insulter in the nose. He would have a civilized bed, in which a man could turn over twice and not fall on the floor, and in which he could sleep twenty-four hours of the day with none to hinder him. Ah, to go home! What else did life hold but that?

Eadie shook hands with them all, the Regular, the Marine—he was a good guy even if he was a leather-neck—Roaring Forty, Twenty-Eight, even the newcomers and the gold-brick friends of the head nurse. He was tempted to shake hands with the prisoners, too, but it might not do, and then he knew no German with which to explain his action.

"Good-by, nurse," said he to his old enemy, the head nurse, "when I'm in New York around New Year's I'll think of you. When I ride up Fifth Avenue on the bus I'll think of you wading around in the mud here."

"Do that, will you?" asked the nurse pleasantly. "And when you get to wherever you're going, remember that I was the one that sent you there."

"A lot you had to do with sending me out of hospital," scoffed Eadie.

"You'd be surprized!" replied the nurse.

"By golly, if I dared to believe you I'd forgive you for all the stuff you've pulled on us the last few months."

"Good-by," said the nurse suddenly, and slammed the office door in Eadie's face.

At the loading platform the men gathered, two and three from each ward, pallid with their stay in hospital, each one hunched in his new overcoat, and each one with the little canvas bag the Red Cross had given him over his shoulder. The train was not a hospital train, but one composed of third-class carriages, the compartments of which held eight men. They did not put eight men in each, but six, so that the six might not be too crowded.

The men were loaded in, some of the hospital personnel went along the train and distributed cans of hash, bully, tomatoes, and jam, with a loaf of bread to each compartment, the doors were banged, and the train began to rattle its way to the seaboard.

HOME! The first stage of the journey! The cars were cold and the seats hard and uncomfortable, but the men were going home and they would have gladly walked to the sea, weakened as they were, or crawled on hands and knees. Home! That was the place for a man. The landscape along the track was the same old country that Eadie had seen so often.

Sheets of rain, swollen brooks, muddy cart tracks crawling up green hillsides, small dirty houses, wayside stations, large towns, where the train changed engines and demobilized French soldiers stood on the platform with their hands in their pockets and idly watched the train. Toward night of the first day the train stopped and the men were all bundled off and on to another.

They ate supper from the cans of food they had with them, and spent the night trying to be comfortable. The second day the train wandered its way across France, all the time in the flood plain of the Loire, a flat, desolate muddy section that stretches without a break in its monotony clear across France. Eadie began to know where he was now, he did not need the piles of rusty tin cans all along the tracks to tell him that he was on a great American troop route. That night they rolled into a station marked Saint Pierre des Corps, where trains for Tours leave the main line. The night they spent in the Caserne Lafayette in Tours.

Another train, another new set of companions the next day. The men were from different hospitals now, even from as far away as Contrexville. The country changed, Poitiers, Angouleme, Libourne.

"I know this country," observed Eadie, "we must be going home from Bordeaux."

"Uh, huh!" agreed the other men.

They had been herded up and down the United States and all over France now for going on two years, never knowing where they were going, and having little interest in their destination anyway.

"We'll know where we're goin' when we get there," was their motto.

Bordeaux at last, the great platform of the Gare du Midi dimly lighted by the afternoon sun and crowded with American and French soldiers. The men all descended from the train and began to gather in groups, according as their names were called by two officers who had been in charge of the train since leaving Tours. Eadie, being a sergeant, had his name toward the head of the list, and so was called early. About thirty men were finally grouped around him and the officer counting them marched them across the platform to another train.

"Where does this go?" Eadie asked the trainman as he got on.

"La Teste and Arcachon," was the reply.

"La Teste!" shrieked Eadie, "why we can't be going to Le Corneau!"

The trainman shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not pretend to know," said he.

Eadie leaped down from the step and frantically sought the officer.

"Here!" he cried, "are we going to Le Corneau?"

"That's what," replied the officer.

"Le Corneau!" cried Eadie, so that all the men turned to look at him, "why that's the place I deserted from last summer to go back to the front!"

"Well, don't worry," said the officer coldly, "they'll try you for it."

"There must be some mistake," protested Eadie. "Why I'm just out of hospital. They told me I was going home!"

"There's no mistake," observed the officer. He got out the order to make sure. "Yes, here it is: Eadie, Robert, Sergeant A 79th Field Artillery, and at the top of the order you see: 'The following named enlisted men to report to commanding officer, F. A. R. R., Le Corneau Gironde.' "

"Ah, the ——!" muttered Eadie, "she knew it all the time."

Then he mounted the train in silence.

CHAPTER XI

HOME

FROM a little way south of Bordeaux almost to the Spanish border stretches a desolate waste of sand, forested with pitch pine. Shepherds live there and gatherers of pitch, and a few fishermen, and during the war the French established training camps for their Senegalese and Annamite battalions among the pines. The poorest, most out of the way, and the worst constructed of these camps was Le Corneau.

Senegalese had been there, and after them the Russians, and after the Russians mutinied, had been subdued, and taken away, the camp was turned over to the Americans. Row after row of dirty whitewashed huts, sand, black with the filth and dirt of its thousands of former occupants, a brick guard-house with no windows, and the dreary stretches of the forest—such was the camp.

A man stood at the main gate of the camp in the early hours of the morning watching the details going out to work and the companies being marched to drill. The man was Sergeant Eadie and it was the morning after his arrival at Le Corneau. It was cold, a damp, raw wind that kept the thermometer hovering around the freezing point drove before it a cold rain, and the marching men bent their heads against it. What a useless thing an overseas cap was in a rain!

Eadie had breakfasted on sour hash and bacon, with a cupful of coffee grounds to wash it down with. He had slept in his clothes and overcoat, but even then he had been cold. First call for drill had blown, and then assembly, but Eadie had not assisted at roll call. He had been in this camp before and knew that it would be several days before his name would appear on the roster. He had also gone away from this camp the last time without the formality of a travel order.

"I think I'll do it again," muttered the sergeant. "It's cold, though, now, and the trains don't run to the front any more. Where would a guy go?"

Yet why rush away? He had only been here a few hours. They might be going to send him home from here after all. Le Corneau was the artillery replacement camp for the A. E. F. and would be the logical place to send an artilleryman who had no outfit. He couldn't expect to go home all by himself like a returning tourist. And his nurse friend had said she had seen his name on the order to go home. Yeh, but when? The whole A. E. F. was going home some day.

Eadie faced the other way and looked at the wall of forest across the road. The last time he had been here he used to go into those woods every day and lie up under the pines until the hour for drill was over. It had been summer then and warm. The pines looked dreary enough now, dripping with rain and swaying in the wind. Still the sergeant had better be getting under cover, for a man standing about with no evident purpose would be the prey of the first officer that went by in search of some one to cut kindling wood or dig a latrine, no matter if the man had as many stripes as a zebra on his arm. Eadie turned and moved out of the gate to the road, where he stopped to consider the best route to take.

"Get the —— back inside that gate!"

Eadie turned. There were two horsemen there, that, riding on the grass beside the road, had approached without his hearing them. They were armed with pistols and had rifles in their gun-boots.

"Gwan!" snarled the man again, "—— you, get the —— back there! Where the —— do you think you are, anyway?"

Eadie still looked at the two men. They were not military police, for they wore no brassards. They had campaign hats, with red hat cords, and must be a part of the permanent personnel of the camp. They had heavy, unintelligent faces and cruel mouths with tobacco-stained lips. One of the men spurred his horse toward the sergeant and kicked at him savagely with his spurred heel. Eadie turned and went back inside the gate. What good would it do him to stay in the road to resist those two brutes? The guard-house, perhaps. Even suppose he hurled a rock at one of them, the other would shoot him down. "Killed by accident," the casualty list would read. A fine ending to a military career. The mounted men looked at him a minute or two and then rode on.

"They're a fine pair o' birds, ain't they?"

Eadie turned. Another soldier stood beside him, a red-faced man, older than Eadie, and this man also wore the campaign hat that marked him as a member of the camp personnel.

"Them kind o' guys are springin' up all over France," observed the man without waiting for Eadie's answer. "The war is over an' they ain't afraid o' bein' sent up to the lines any more. War is ——, but it ain't got nothin' on peace."

"I'll say," agreed Eadie. "I've seen hard-boiled M. P.s in my time, but I always knew that under his hard-boiled skin the M. P. was just a soldier trying to keep himself out of the guard-house like the rest of us. But those two slave-drivers! They're brutes, that's the word. Imagine Americans putting thugs like that to guard other Americans!"

"How long yuh been here?" grinned the other man.

"I've just come," said Eadie. "I was here last summer and went over the hill to get away. I'm going to do it again."

"Don't," said the other man soberly. "The guys that's A. W. O. L. is S. O. L. now. The first thing they do when they catch yuh is to pass yuh a beat in. There was a buddy o' mine that went up to Bordeaux an' hadn't more'n got off the train before they had him. He was in the Casino de Lilas a month, luggin' rails all day. Then he got sent down here an' got three months more for bein' absent in Bordeaux. It didn't make no difference that he was in the mill up there; he was gone a month an' that was enough."

"Well, what do they do with the men here now?" asked Eadie. "How long do they keep a guy here? They used to send up replacements every week, but they don't need replacements any more."

"They send wounded men here for classification," said the other. "A guy in A class goes back to his outfit, B gets duty in an office or gets a job in a camp like this, C gets convalescent camp, an' D gets sent home right off. You'll be goin' over in a day or two if you come in yesterday. The doc looks 'em over."

"Suppose a guy gets D class, how long before he'd go home?"

"Oh," said the other, "if you get D now you ought to be home for Fourth of July. How long did it take to get the A. E. F. to France? Nigh to two years. How they gonna get 'em home any quicker?"

"That's right," muttered Eadie. "It looks as if I was set to spend some time in this hell-hole after all. Well, how do they eat here?"

The other man's face darkened.

"Well, I'll tell yuh," he said bitterly, "it would puke a buzzard!"

"I guess it's going to be a hard winter!" remarked Eadie sadly.

"It is that," agreed the other, "but if you go tryin' to get away an' get caught, it'll be lots harder!"

Eadie went back to the cold barracks. The huts were unheated and in addition, open to any wandering breeze. The weather was just cold enough to be raw and uncomfortable, like a rainy day in late September at home. Men sat about on the double-deck bunks, their hands plunged into their coat pockets and their heads sunk into their coat collars.

A meager dinner of slum began the afternoon. After dinner the well men marched sullenly away to drill and the sick, lame and lazy slunk back to the cheerless huts. Only once throughout the afternoon did any one speak to Sergeant Eadie, and that was when he decided to sleep, and removed his overcoat to spread over himself after he had lain down. A gloomy man on the next bunk noticed the gleam of Eadie's new wound stripes.

"Yuh got on two wound stripes?" inquired the gloomy man.

"Yes," replied Eadie.

"Yuh make two trips to hospital?" asked the other skeptically.

"Yes."

"Yuh got an order givin' yuh authority to wear 'em?"

"Horseteeth!" replied Eadie, lying down and pulling his overcoat over him.

"Yuh ain't got no right to wear 'em less yuh got an order," said the other man triumphantly.

"I'll show you the wounds if you want to see 'em!" snapped Eadie. "Who the —— are you, anyway?"

The other man grunted and retired into his coat collar without further reply.

The third day of his stay in Le Corneau Eadie was summoned to the company office and ordered to report to the hospital for classification.

"Suppose a guy is classified definitely," Eadie asked the clerk, "how long before he gets shoved out of here?"

"That depends on the classification. If he gets D or C he's liable to be here for some time."

"And A or B?"

"They get sent out pretty soon," said the clerk, "we're always getting calls for men."

Eadie thought deeply as he tramped across the camp to the hospital. Desertion from the camp was impossible, he had made sure of that. No trains went out except the regular rattler to La Teste and this was as full of M.P.s as it could pack. The roads were patrolled by cavalry, the camp provost detachment, military police, and detachments furnished by the main guard. On the other hand, life in the camp was intolerable. It had been bad enough when he had been there the first time, but now the type of soldier had changed. Before, the men had been the average American, wounded from the Regular and National Guard divisions, volunteers, every one of them. Now the camp was filled with the scum of every nationality on the face of the earth, the dregs of the famous American melting pot that the long arm of the draft had stirred up.

There were heavy jowled, stolid Slavs, curly-headed Albanians and Greeks, round-headed filthy Russian Jews, Italians of the lowest sort, a crowd of men that scarcely spoke English—dirty, undisciplined, ignorant men who addressed an officer as "boss" and a sergeant as "Hey, Jack!"

They lived and ate and slept like animals and the sight of them smacking and crunching their food would turn even a soldier's stomach. What then could a man do? To go over the hill meant disaster, and to stay was impossible.

Still, there might be a way. A man that could make his way through the woods at night in enemy territory ought to be able to elude a few police. But where to go? Where was the outfit? The outfit!"

"I'm going back, by ——!" cried Eadie suddenly. "Why didn't I think of it before?"

He walked on more briskly. But could it be done? He was still very weak, he slept every afternoon, and a walk from the barracks to the camp gate exhausted him. And how about home, where a man could take off his uniform and forget it all?

"Nix," said Eadie aloud, "I'm a non-commissioned officer of the Regular Army and wherever my bunk is is home to me."

He went into the hospital, into a large room full of men and he removed his clothes as the other men had. Three doctors stood in the circle of naked men, and the men went through various exercises, rising on their toes, extending their arms, bending down, all with the intention of displaying any loss of movement to the three doctors.

Then the men leaped up and down in place for some time, and after that the doctors went about with stethoscopes listening to hearts and asking each man the nature of his wound. The doctor paused before Eadie and poked his scar with a stubby finger.

"What gave you that?" asked the doctor.

"Appendicitis," replied Eadie.

"Humm. They did a poor job on you. How do you feel?"

"Fine," replied Eadie.

"Want to go back to your outfit?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Put him down 'A'," directed the doctor, and went on to the next man.

A week at Le Corneau! Was there any hell of battle to be compared to it? No. But the week finally passed and on the eighth day Eadie found himself acting first sergeant of a detachment of replacements for the Army of Occupation. They went away early in the afternoon in third class cars and Eadie began his third journey to rejoin the battery. It was not like the old wartime trips, with a train-load of shouting, singing, soldiers full of red wine and getting fuller every time the train stopped, with men falling out of cars and off the roofs and losing the train at stations and appearing at the next stop having caught an express, and finally disappearing for good.

No, times had changed. Every station was guarded by an inflexible barrage of police. Where the tank cars full of wine used to stand unguarded there were now railway employees still in the blue of the Army, and wise to all the tricks of the soldier.

No more was there that rough bon *camarade* spirit, the "soldiers all and to —— with civilians," that Eadie had known. Every one was disgusted, every one begrudging every minute he spent in uniform. At Metz the scene suddenly changed. The slouchy French in civilian clothes and Army overcoat that crowded the station platforms disappeared, and in their place appeared very snappy soldiers with bayoneted rifles, chasseurs alpins, tirailleurs, colonials in red hats, Senegalese, occasional British, and then, finally, Americans, alert, clean, well dressed, shaven, shoes polished in spite of the mud, men to make another American weep tears of joy.

Gone were the round heads, the curly heads, and the dirty-heads. Americans, well kept, in new finely fitting uniforms. Eadie took off his overcoat and looked critically at his own salvage blouse and breeches. Well, he would be paid at the outfit and then he was going to buy himself a new uniform, from putts to cap.

"How come you wear two wound stripes, Sergeant?" asked one of the men in the compartment.

"I was wounded twice," replied Eadie coldly.

"Oh," said the other. The other men all grinned.

"It ain't nothin' to us," said a man in the corner, grinning, "only look out when you get to the outfit. I heard you tell the doctor you had appendicitis."

The next day the train rattled through suburbs that reminded a man vaguely of Saint Louis or Indianapolis, clattered over a great iron bridge and came to a halt.

The place swarmed with Americans. It was Coblenz, the headquarters of the Army of Occupation, a city famous as a resort and garrisoned by a Corps d'Armée before the war, the capital of the French Department of the Rhine under Nàpoleon, the capital of Rhenish Prussia under the Kaisers, and now the capital of the occupied area.

A great place, thought Eadie, a fine place in which time would not hang heavy on a man's hands. However, no such luck. Before he had done looking around, the sergeant had been marched out of the station and loaded into a truck. By virtue of his rank he rode on the seat, but the other men had to ride inside. The replacement detachment, it appeared, had been split up upon arrival at Coblenz, those for the Fourth Division going one way, and those from the Third and Forty-Second going another.

"What's the next stop?" Eadie asked the driver.

"Brigade headquarters," answered the driver shortly.

They rattled through the streets and finally came out into the snow-clad country. Eadie turned up the collar of his overcoat and shivered.

"How's the soldering here?" he asked.

"'Taint bad," replied the driver. "It's better'n it was in France. You are placement?"

"No," said Eadie, "I was wounded."

"Where was you wounded?" demanded the driver suspiciously, so that Eadie gasped at his vehemence.

"Why, in the Argonne!" answered Eadie aghast.

"Where in the Argonne?"

"At Montfaucon."

"Huh," grunted the driver, "you don't look it."

"Well, I was. I'll show you the wound if you want to see it."

"I don't want to see it," said the driver, "it ain't nothin' to me, only every goldbrick an' camouflager an' sick an' lame an' lazy gimmick that ever heard o' the Third Division is comin' back now that the war is over. 'Lots o' beer an' frauleins in Germany, let's go,' they says, and they come outta their holes where they been all through the war an' come back here with some line o' bull they was wounded or in hospital or somethin'. Huh! There's Frog Leclair, he had functional disorders every time he heard a shell burst an' it got chronic on him. They sent him out. He's back now, swellin' around with his chest out in a tailor made uniform. His trouble don't bother him no more. They ain't no shell bursts here!"

Eadie made no reply and the truck covered several kilometers. A peasant in a high-wheeled cart took a long time to clear the road and when the driver had finished swearing at him he turned to Eadie again.

"Another thing that riles me," said the driver, "is that these here Johns show up with their arms all plastered with wound stripes, and gold stars, and canteen medals on their chests and fouraggeress and God knows what, and not a —— one of 'em rates anything! Well, the provost marshal is out for 'em now. If a man ain't got an order for a stripe or a medal right in his pocket, he don't wear it."

"Listen," said Eadie, "what's the idea of popping off at me? I was wounded and back at the front again while you were still trying to make up your mind who the war was with. And I'm rankest sergeant of 'A' battery of the 79th and I can put any man in this division in the can, too. I was wounded right in back of the guns and the whole —— first battalion saw me get it. Now! What do you think of that for gooseberries?"

"I wasn't sayin' nothin' about you," said the driver. "A man's got a right to speak his mind, ain't he? You got on two wound stripes—I seen 'em when you was puttin' on your coat. How the —— can a man get two wound stripes between July and November and still get back to his outfit at New Year's?"

"One of 'em's for appendicitis!" said a voice from the back of the truck.

The driver blew his horn and shifted gears for a long hill. Eadie said nothing. At brigade headquarters Eadie gave his name and they sent him with an orderly down the street to a ration dump, from which a truck was soon leaving for his battalion, quartered in a neighboring town.

Again Eadie mounted the driver's seat, again the truck grunted and banged its way out of town and through the snow-covered fields. Eadie was alone and the back of the truck full of rations, so that his riding the seat did not proclaim him a non-com.

"What outfit yuh out of, buddy?" asked the new driver after a while.

"'A,'" replied Eadie from his coat collar.

"Wounded?" asked the driver.

"No!" barked Eadie, "I'm a replacement."

"Funny," commented the driver, "you look a lot like a sergeant outta A that got wounded."

They passed a field where a mounted band was formed on white horses. The leader's saber glittered.

"Regimental call, adjutant's call," the command came clearly across the snow. The saber dropped and the cold cry of the trumpets blared. Eadie's skin prickled. His band! That was his outfit's band!

"You c'n git off here," the driver said, slowing down the truck, "the P. C. is right down that street."

Eadie got down and then, pack in hand, looked around.

"By —— if it ain't him!" cried two voices simultaneously.

"I told yuh he'd never die as long as I had them glasses," said a third. Eadie turned. Ham, Baldy and Short Mack fell upon his neck.

"Man, you always play in luck!" cried Ham. "Here we been here two months an' through —— an' just as they begin to let up on us a bit, in you come!"

"Come on down to the club," said Baldy, "the non-coms rate a special mess an' bein' all sergeants now, we can talk there easier than here. I been made since I seen you last. Did you have much of a time with that wound?"

"Tell the truth an' say no," advised Short Mack as they went down the street. "Tell the truth. It didn't no more than knock the wind out of yuh."

They entered a house a short distance down the street. It bore all the marks of a barroom, but inside was clean and warm.

A strongly built, blue-eyed girl appeared and grinned at the four men.

"Her mother's the cook," explained Ham.

"*Vier bier!*" ordered Short, sitting down at the long table.

"*Schnell!*" added Baldy.

"*Wie gehts?*" asked Ham. The three then turned their eyes questioningly on Eadie, as if to say, "Waddyuh think o' that for German, kid?"

"And you birds all speak German now!" exclaimed Eadie with admiration.

"It was tough learnin' it," said Ham. "There was a time when if you batted an eye at a German, man or woman, the mill and a six months' blind for you. It's changed a little now. The orders is still on, but we got so we can beat 'em now an' then. You sure come back in a good time."

"Boy, you were lucky you didn't make the march into Germany with us!" cried Short. "No gold-bricking behind the caisson then. We changed colonels just before we started and the one we got was rarin' to make us snap out of it. You'd never known some o' the officers, they got so hard-boiled overnight."

"It makes a difference with a guy when he knows that there's no chance o' some one's easin' a bullet into him in the excitement o' the fight!" remarked Baldy.

"Shut up!" cried Short. "We was hikin' a hundred and twenty steps to the minute and marchin' at attention all the time, and washin' the carriages every night, full pack every man, show down inspection Saturday, snappy salute, the mill if they caught you with your pistol belt off, not allowed to leave camp after dark, oh, boy!"

"It ain't bad now," said Ham. "Eadie, you're in luck. They're drillin' us as if they were gettin' ready for another war, but there's a new rumor out that we're goin' home, so maybe it won't last long."

"Eadie, you was always lousy with luck," remarked Short. "We used to think of you when we was hikin' through the cold rain, tired an' hungry, an' it gettin' dark an' the guns an' carriages to wash an' horses to water before we'd get any sleep, an' you snug an' warm in a white bed holdin' a good-lookin' nurse's hand!"

Eadie grunted. It was warm in the room and he arose and removed his overcoat. Then he sat down again, resting his arms on the table. The beer arrived, but no one drank. They were all looking at Eadie's sleeve. On his right cuff was the mark of stripes, such as one sees on the sleeve of a newly busted non-com. There were little bits of thread there and a tear where the knife had slipped.

"You ain't wearin' no wound stripes?" questioned Ham, after an embarrassed pause.

"No," said Eadie. "The whole outfit knows I was wounded." He took a draught of beer and smacked his lips. "All you get by wearing wound stripes is a lot of cheap conversation!"

THE END

SHINGLES OUT OF BANDON

by Albert Richard Wetjen

Author of "Exactly," "The Island of France," etc.

THE steam-schooner *Marquan* was loading redwood shingles at Bandon, Oregon. She was a queer-looking craft, a sailing schooner converted to engines. Her one-time tall masts had been cut to mere stumps of their former tapering height; her poop had been stripped of chart-house and taffrail and converted to a bare sort of boat deck, cluttered with wire reels, sounding machine, bucket racks, etc. Her midship-house had been raised and lengthened until it was something like a genuine bridge. She retained none of her previous beauty and had gained nothing of the look of sturdy power common to steamers. She was a hybrid, an outcast, a nondescript sort of packet.

Captain Ellis, however, considered she was a craft of worth and efficiency. As he owned most of her, that was to be expected. His mate, who possessed a sixteenth share, had much the same opinion. But every other man who stood on the log-laid streets of Bandon and watched her sniffed aloud and commented adversely on her appearance. Just the same she had made a substantial living until the post-war slump had struck the coast and turned even mighty steel freighters into scavengers of minute cargoes in every tiny port their great draft would allow them to creep into. It was common knowledge that even the *Mayor Baker* had descended to carrying hands and supplies for the Alaskan fisheries, and she was the pride of the great Portland Line of cargo carriers.

At present the *Marquan* trembled between a thorough overhauling in the best ship-repairing yard on the coast and destruction on the stocks of the shipbreakers. Captain Ellis was quite frank about the matter. He explained the situation fully to his first mate, Mr. Lascelles, as they stood on the little bridge and watched the redwood shingles come aboard, sling-load after sling-load, clean and sweet-smelling in the ocean summer breeze.

"I knew about what the Green Flag Line's bid'd be," he remarked, "and I undercut them pretty bad. Old Hanson at the mill told me that much. Still, if we can get that contract signed up we'll be fixed for three years. It's possible to make near ten per cent. This trip'll decide it. Hanson was clear about that. Quick delivery is the thing. If we can show him we can land the shingles at Vancouver by the twenty-third we get the contract. If we don't the Green Flag gets it. Hanson'd sooner pay higher freight than miss the New York boat that starts each Monday."

"That's so," said the mate. He ruffled his iron-gray mustache and leaned over the bridge rail to roar an order at one of the winch-men. He resumed, "An' the Green Flag Line's got three ships. . . ."

"That's it," admitted the captain, frowning. "They're each faster than our packet. They'd have no trouble delivering on time. We will. I cut it pretty close for an eight-knot tub— Still, once the contract's signed they can't back out. And anyway, when we land this cargo, get paid, and have everything cinched, we can have th' old hooker overhauled at Murray's. The chief tells me with new boilers we c'n get two knots an hour extra."

"We'll make it all right." The mate was confident. "The glass's high. The weather's calm as a drawin'-room. Nothing to do but hog it t' Vancouver and deliver. We ought to be twelve hours ahead of time."

"That's true. Still, I'm worried. It means a lot— I'll be back in th' focsle if we fall down on it." He frowned again and stared at the powerful squat schooner lying ahead of the *Marquan*. "What with those old bills— They'll foreclose on us 'less that contract's ours— Look at that fat sea hog ahead. Old Cap'n Murphy's purple in th' face 'cause his firm lost out."

The mate spared a moment for a grin. There was always enmity between the three ships of the Green Flag and the solitary craft that Captain Ellis owned. And the enmity would be intensified now that the slow and ancient *Marquan* had captured a fat job from the speedy lean *San José*. The channels to such ports as Bandon were too shallow for the big ships from Frisco and Portland. The trade was all in the hands of the coasting schooners. And with things as they were Captain Ellis and his mate knew that the loss of such a contract as Hanson's mill was able to give would mean almost the eclipse of the Green Flag. For ships lying idle eat up reserve funds a lot faster than they can be accumulated.

In the saloon of the *San José*, at that moment the president of the Green Flag Line, the principal stockholder and Captain Murphy were in session. They shared between them a bottle of the best whisky and they talked in low voices, with frequent glances around as if afraid of something. As a consequence of that talk the *San José* sailed in ballast from Bandon nearly a day before the *Marquan* had finished loading at the wharf.

THE *Marquan* had been at sea some ten hours when Mr. Lascelles came running down the bridge companion and burst open the door of the captain's cabin. He was very perturbed. He was strangely white and shaken. His mustache bristled. His hands opened and closed.

He said, thickly:

"There's a —— Green Flag boat away t' starboard—away t' starboard!"

"Well?" Captain Ellis looked surprized. He laid down the paper he was reading and rose to his feet, slowly buttoning up his uniform jacket. "Well, what of it? The sea ain't ours."

"A Green Flag boat," shouted Mr. Lascelles, waving his arms. "—— them! We've got no time to waste!"

"What's got into you, man? What's the matter?"

The mate glared at him and then managed—

"She's flying distress signals."

The captain was staggered. He groped at his chin and rubbed it slowly. A dazed look was in his eyes. He looked over the mate's shoulders, through the open doorway to where the summer sea gleamed blue under the sun.

"In distress?" he repeated vaguely. "This weather an' in distress?"

"So she says. Some sort of —— trick to hold us up!"

The captain frowned and jammed on his uniform cap. He strode out of his cabin to the lower bridge and went up the companion. Away to port wallowed the *San José*, sitting low on the long ground swell and taking spray aboard she was so waterlogged. Captain Ellis stared at her intently through his glasses and could see men working at the hand-pumps so that rusty-colored water spouted from ragged ends of hose dangling overside.

The mate raved beside him.

"Some ——ed trick! You've got to ignore them, sir. It's a put-up job to make us late."

The captain was rigid, his face pale and set with the conflict within him, but he said, stiffly—

"She's flying distress signals, Mister."

"It's a put-up job," insisted the mate.

"I can't take a chance about that," the captain went on, his voice cold. He felt empty inside. He didn't want to argue. He knew there could be no argument. He was a father, a husband and a business man, but he had to be a sailor first.

The mate raved, swinging his fists at the other vessel.

"She ought to be able to make the beach. We can't waste time with her. We've only got a margin of twelve hours and that's sailing at full speed. We'll go smash!"

It was true. To pick up a heavy tow

like the *San José*, water-logged as she appeared, would be to cut the speed of the *Marquan* in half at least. And to call in at some near-by port and have a tug sent to her would mean the time was lost anyway. Neither ship carried wireless. Few of the coasting schooners did. And there could be no thought of passing by even the vessel of a rival line. The captain knew it. Deep within him the mate knew it. As the captain had said, they couldn't take the chance of it being a frame-up. They couldn't. If it wasn't a frame-up, they would be broken by an inquiry board. The right to command would be taken from them. They would have violated the greatest law of the sea. It was tragedy, but it could not be helped. The game was greater than the player of the game. Contract or no contract one sailor must aid another.

"Starboard th' helm," said the captain harshly, and the wheel spun round. Mr. Lascelles went muttering to the foredeck to gather the crew and stand ready for what might arise. It was preposterous that such a vessel as the *San José* should be disabled and sinking in such weather. Why, it was the middle of summer.

Captain Ellis was aging rapidly as he stood by the bridge rail and watched ruin descend on him. His creditors would show no mercy when they learned he had lost the contract. Why should they? It was his only chance of getting out of debt. True, the Green Flag Line would have to pay salvage but the courts would take a year or so to adjust that, and anyway the line could afford to pay when they had the contract safely tucked in their vaults. Captain Ellis knew that today's work would mean for him the focsle again. How could he get another command when so many captains were out of work already? Yet there was nothing else for it. It was the way of the sea. Even in her tranquil moods she could be cruel.

The *Marquan* ploughed across the blue rollers until she was within hailing distance of the *San José*. Then Captain Ellis procured his megaphone and shouted across the distance.

"*San José*, ahoy! What's the matter?"

And Captain Murphy bellowed back, his voice strangely shaken:

"Lost m' screw and struck a leak. Ten feet of water in th' holds an' it's gaining. My engines are disabled too."

"Do you want to abandon?" There was little chance there. As if any commander would do that until the very last moment when all hope was gone.

"Abandon? Abandon a sound ship in this weather?" It was rather too much to expect. Captain Murphy was astounded. Captain Ellis swore.

"What can I do for you then?"

"Give me a tow into Astoria."

The captain laughed bitterly. He had expected it but it came as a shock just the same. He lifted his megaphone once more, and sealed the hopelessness of his future with seven words.

"Stand by to pick up my line!"

Then he called harsh orders to the furious Mr. Lascelles on the fordeck, and the mate led the men aft to where was coiled the *Marquan's* largest wire. They took enough of it from the reel and made fast a light line to a heavier one and the heavier one to the eye of the wire. The *Marquan* maneuvered close—it was not dangerous in the almost calm sea—and a seaman flung the light line to those standing on the *San José's* foredeck.

It was hauled aboard. Then the heavier line followed and at the end of that the powerful new wire that was kept for just such an emergency as this. When it was finally carried round the *San José's* foremast and back to her for'ard bitts, Captain Ellis wiped his clammy brow and laid a hand on the telegraph. He was ruined. There was not the slightest hope of anything else now. He jammed down the lever. The *Marquan* moved ahead. The wire danced up and down like a shipping rope, splashing the placid sea. Then it tautened, jerked on the *San José* and afterward drooped to a heavy sagging and remained almost motionless. The two ships forged slowly ahead, the old engines of the leader beating their hearts out and accomplishing barely three knots.

The *San José* was no light tow. She had been in ballast and would have been awkward had she been dry. With ten feet of water in her holds and a swell that herded against her all the time she dragged terribly at the lighter and less powerful schooner. Not that time mattered now. Long before she was docked in Astoria it would be too late to catch the New York boat at Vancouver. With hope gone, Captain Ellis could face the future with a certain stoical despair and resignation. That was how he felt now, standing on the bridge and gazing with bitter eyes at the vessel wallowing and lumbering astern. The chance of his life, the chance to recuperate his lost fortunes all gone because the ship of a rival line must get disabled, and all in weather that would not endanger a paper boat. He cursed the oceans of the world, the ships of all the coast, the spirit that had prompted him to serve the sea and most of all the day he was born. He knew, surely as the night follows day, that a week hence he would be seeking work among the common focsle hands.

BEFORE night a sullenness crept over the face of the sun. The horizon clouded with purple mist that turned later to gray. The sea commenced to rise with an uneasy, sighing noise and the face of the water grew oily. Then there burst up from the south, almost as the night fell, blotting things from sight, one of those swift summer storms that come to being somewhere west and south of Hawaii and die in foaming ruin on the rock-girt shores of Alaska.

Two hours before it broke, however, Captain Ellis had his boats double-lashed, extra tarpaulins placed on his hatches and everything movable well secured. He was carrying a deck cargo of shingles, and he knew they were as good as lost already. Still, with all the thoroughness of a sailor he had them covered with old tarpaulins and wired down. Then, wrapped in oilskins himself, sea-booted, a sou'wester low over his eyes, he walked the tiny bridge in preparation for the storm.

The *San José* still lumbered astern, her crew also busy stripping and binding her for the coming struggle. She was even lower in the water than before, and Captain Murphy had reported by semaphore that his forehold was completely flooded but that the bulkheads were holding well. Soon after that communication the gale struck.

The night sky was dense with swirling vapor. The shouting wind was chill as if it had come from off the northern ice instead of the southern calms. The sea walked majestically between the horizons, green and tall and foaming at the crests. It swept the decks of the *San José* so that she yawed wildly and plucked with savageness at the wire that led from her bows into the smother where the hampered *Marquan* was laboring before the storm, hardly able to steer with any certitude so great was the burden that held her back.

Once Mr. Lascelles crossed the bridge to Captain Ellis and said, quietly, almost in a whisper:

"If we cut— It's endangering our own vessel to carry on. They might put out oil and drift ashore all right—" But Captain Ellis looked at him and the mate's eyes dropped. He muttered defensively, "Well, I've got a wife and children too." Then he walked away. The temptation was very great, but he knew, somewhere deep down, that had he been captain of the *Marquan* he would have disdained reply also. There was something greater than contracts and family in the service men rendered to the sea.

It was nearly midnight when the wire broke. The *San José* shipped a great green sea over her poop, sat back on her stern and stopped so that the hawser straightened violently. At the same moment the *Marquan* soared forward on the shoulder of another sea and the double tension snapped the wire clean so that it thrummed in the breaking like an overtaut violin string.

The *San José* immediately fell into the trough, and became, to all intents and purposes, a half-tide rock. She was swept by sea after sea and everything movable was torn from her decks. She lost two men and a boy from the lower bridge and had another man injured against the bridge rail. It was a miracle her bulkheads held, especially as her forehold was already flooded. She was hardly to be seen in the gloom and murk only lighted at fitful intervals by the watery moon the racing scud allowed to peer forth.

The *Marquan*, released of the terrible burden, darted forward almost lightly, keeping ahead of the seas, so that her decks no longer took water aboard. The easiness with which she rode before the storm was apparent to all hands. The mate crossed the bridge again and licked his lips. He started.

"The wire's gone— It's pretty thick." He lowered his voice and looked around. No one was within earshot. "It's easy to fail to locate a ship— We've still time to make Vancouver."

The captain croaked hoarsely.

"Shut up! You ought to know better. Been in ships for twenty years— Hard a port! Get th' wire ready again! —— you, don't argue with me!— We're smashed but we'll be smashed for something. Get aft!"

And the mate went aft, smiling bitterly and understanding that Captain Ellis had had the same temptations whispering to him.

Coming round in the smother the *Marquan's* decks were swept. She lost the last of her deck cargo. She lost all but one of her boats. Her bridge was almost annihilated, most of the woodwork splintered away and the bare steel superstructure alone standing upright though badly buckled. Fortunately the wheel was left intact. The engine-room was flooded once and then the chief bolted all doors on the inside and seamen drew double tarpaulins over the ruined skylights, so that the men below labored like rats in a trap.

Captain Ellis turned his vessel at last. His voice rose cold and calm above the noise, ordering the helmsman as he eased the *Marquan* back. Then she went full ahead into the teeth of the gale looking for the helpless *San José*. It was like finding a needle in a haystack, for the other schooner was like a mere reef covered with foam. But for the fitful intervals of watery moonlight the *Marquan* might never have seen her. As it was it took fifteen minutes to catch sight of her masts and buckled smokestack in the smother.

Both captains were using oil now and the effect was slowly being felt. As the *Marquan* ploughed into position, dangerously close in an attempt to throw a heaving line, the breakers ceased to lift to such enormous heights and their crests were smoothing over with oil film, so that they no longer curled and broke.

The cast of the heaving line failed, as the wind was against the thrower, and tore the monkey knot back almost in the captain's face.

A canvas bag dripping oil from bow and stern, the *Marquan* then forced a way to windward, so that the *San José* was ahead of her. Somehow a line must be got on board again if only so that the crew could get away in the event of foundering.

Captain Ellis, confronted with this problem of seamanship, forgot all about his time-contract and his ruin, and remembered only that he was a master of the craft and that a fellow master was in dire necessity.

Once to windward the captain hove overboard a light line attached to a life buoy. The water between the ships was a disturbed series of violent whirlpools but was innocent of foam and curving seas due to the spread of the oil. The white line buoy floated down with the set of the water, nearer and nearer to the lifting and falling steel hull that was the *San José*.

At the risk of his life a seaman was clinging half-way down a pilot ladder slung from the rail and waiting for the buoy to approach near enough to be seized. Had he been on the weather side of the schooner, as he was now, without oil to smooth the water and the bulk of the little *Marquan* to provide a lee, he would have been plucked to his death as easily as a straw.

The buoy bumped the schooner's side nearly twelve feet from where the seaman hung.

Hurriedly his shipmates above let go the pilot ladder and carried it along the rail, still slung overside and with the man on it, until it was right over the buoy. The man bent, scooped the buoy up so that his arm held it to him, and then those above literally hurled him upward toward them.

Communication was established.

The line was hauled on and brought aboard a heavier line again and finally the end of the broken hawser. Again this was carried round the foremast of the *San José*, this time with two full round turns, and made fast to the bitts.

And all the time this was in progress the *Marquan* wallowed there in the full force of the gale and gave the other ship a shelter.

Then, when all was fast, she stood away and hurtled down wind, her engines first at half speed and then at full astern so that the wire should not tighten with a jerk again. This ticklish maneuver was accomplished at last and again both ships went ploughing before the storm, the *San José* a sad-looking wreck and only kept afloat because men pumped continually in the shelter decks and because Captain Murphy was obstinate and would not give up.

The *Marquan* was in little better state outwardly, though her holds were dry, and in any case the redwood shingles would have aided her to keep afloat even had she been waterlogged.

THE long night wore on. The gale, as suddenly as it had begun, screamed itself away to the north and left behind a jumbled, tossing sea on which shone a clear, summer moon. Warmth came to the gentle air once more. Dawn found the sea sinking to the deceptive blue placidness it had worn the previous day. Nothing remained at last to tell of the fury of the water save only battered ships and gray-faced bodies washed on the beach with the tides.

Wearily, like an old man limping homeward, the *Marquan* reached Astoria with the *San José* still in tow. Tugs came to aid her as soon as they saw what was toward. The *San José* was pushed and pulled alongside the wharf, where she quietly and gently sank until only her main deck was showing and the water lapped at her lower rail. The *Marquan* tied up ahead of her, and before thinking of sleep or food Captain Ellis went ashore to send off a wire to old Hanson back in Bandon to tell him his cargo had missed the New York boat. That accomplished he went back on board and dropped to sleep the minute he lay on his bunk, dressed as he was in oilskins, sea-boots and sou'wester. And in the next cabin, similarly attired, Mr. Lascelles was sleeping also.

No god stepped from the box to straighten Captain Ellis's badly crashing affairs. He received no great reward for what he had done. Life is usually that way. He expected nothing for that matter. He had seen the issue very clearly, as had Mr. Lascelles, when first the *San José* had been sighted. So he did not blame old Hanson when that lumberman wired back that he'd signed the contract with the Green Flag Line. That was business. Old Hanson would be the first to clap him on the back and say what a great seaman he was. But at the same time Hanson had to keep his mill running and deliver his shingles on time.

Captain Murphy of the still sunken *San José* came to see Captain Ellis late that afternoon when both men had had their sleep. The Green Flag sailor was very pale of face and fumbled with his peaked cap a long time before speaking. Captain Ellis leaned back in his swivel chair and watched the other master with a slight smile.

He said at last, breaking the awkward silence—

"Well, we got you in all right."

Captain Murphy nodded.

"You did that. I expected you to leave me after the wire went. You were makin' heavy weather of it yourself— I gotta say, Captain— I gotta say—" He hesitated and fumbled with his cap again. He managed at last, desperately, his eyes on the carpet, "I gotta say, Captain, that it was all framed for you from the first. I was to lay off Waldport and flag you for a tow. An' when you'd hooked up, as we knew you would, I was to heave a 'awser out astern as a drag an' start m' engines astern every little while. I was goin' t' flood 'er a bit too t' make it real like. You see?" He looked up then and his face was red. He blurted on, "It was soft. We all knew you would stop. You'd have lost that Hanson contract."

Captain Ellis was rigid. So it had been a put-up job after all, eh? Lascelles had been right. He had been a fool to help the ship of a rival line at such a time. His seamanship, so well known along the coast, had been played on and made mock of. He had ruined himself and made himself a laughing stock from Eureka to Seattle. He bit his lips but said nothing. What was there to say? Only his eyes grew bleak and very cold.

Captain Murphy was adding:

"That's what was framed, Captain— I know what you think of me. I had to agree. I've got a family— But—but it fell through."

"Fell through?" echoed Captain Ellis listlessly and hardly hearing.

"Aye. Y'see, we hit a derelict four hours before you hove in sight. I *had* lost m' screw an' I *was* leaking, as I said. You saved our lives."

"I ought to have left you to drown," intoned the other bitterly. "Your gang's dirty, all right— I don't blame you, Murphy. I know what it is with a family. You don't happen to know where I could get a job as able seaman, do you?"

"Is it as bad as that? As bad as that?" stammered the embarrassed Murphy. "Oh, Lord, if I can help you at all—"

But Captain Ellis merely waved for him to go and smiled bitterly again.

"You can't, Murphy. You've helped me all you could when you said you were really in distress. I know I did right now. Good-by."

CAPTAIN ELLIS went smash, as he knew he would. His creditors foreclosed. The old *Marquan* found her way to the shipbreakers and was seen no more. Mr. Lascelles found a berth running a tugboat up Seattle way. And Captain Ellis found his reward, such as it was, when he met Captain Harrison on Washington Street in Portland, the same Captain Harrison who commanded the *Rose City*, the biggest liner running passengers coastwise from Vancouver to San Diego.

"Ellis!" hailed Captain Harrison, specially crossing the street to shake hands. "Heard about that *San José* affair. Good piece of work. Fine piece of work— By the way, I'm a second mate short. I know it's not much for a man of your ability but the pay's good—"

"Thanks," said Captain Ellis, flushing. "I'll be along some time tomorrow." And he knew that he had received something greater than the lost contract, greater than salvage money and fame. He had received the approval of his fellow men, seamen like himself, who understood and acknowledged that certain work had been accomplished well. Which, after all, was the thing that mattered.

THE CRUSOE OF CEDAR ISLAND

by Patrick Vaux

THE readers of *Adventure* have met with many Crusoes in fact and fiction since the magazine first took their fealty; and, doubtless, some of them have had castaways' experiences which, today, can still be as dire and exciting as ever in the times of quadrant and staff and mast and yards. But which of the Crusoe stories known can not be paralleled for drama and shock of sensation? Which represents fate working out relentlessly to its end?

The Bermudas are a dreamland, and as paradisiacal as any spot in Polynesia. Yet few, if any, of the leisured rich who resort to St. George's, Hamilton, and elsewhere in the Bermoothes are aware of the extraordinary drama which, little more than a century ago, dragged out its culminating and appalling scenes on Cedar Island. For grim horror and stark tragedy it stands alone. Only Ambrose Bierce could have conceived of it.

Cedar Island, so fair to see, is, like its three hundred and sixty-four neighbors of the group, as flat as a pancake. Like most of them it has its cedar wood, and tiny harbor defended by breakwaters, built by the coral insect and running down steeply into the bluest of blue water; and like them it has palm-fringed shores and much undergrowth of strange plants, and over all an aspect of exquisite beauty. But few 'Mudians venture here except in the sunny hours. A something pervades the island.

And, truly, if ever the spirit of man haunts its former scenes, then that of the malignant Creole, Blagden, does haunt the spot of his condemnation on Cedar Island. Even in the light of noontide, with the palms shaking in the moving airs, there is an eerie gloom in the accursed spot and the heavy hearse-like plumes of the cedars remain still and funereal. It is as if Blagden has laid a curse on the exact place of his appalling doom. The place where he so frequently enacted that awful deed.

St. George's, even a hundred and twenty years ago, was a busy port, for the Great French War brought much grist to the Islands, and among the leading business men was a Mr. M——, who was highly esteemed in mercantile and official circles. He had, however, a son, who sowed his wild oats abundantly. His vices, common enough in those days at home and in the West Indies, were looked on with charitable eyes; but, strong complaints arising through his diverting of business funds, his father was compelled to put him out of the office. In his place Mr. M—— appointed Blagden, who had worked himself up from office boy under Mr. M——.

The Creole was a handsome and very

capable fellow, but with, as was later remembered, a peculiarly forbidding cast of eye when ill-tempered. Well-mannered, and crafty in concealing his vices, Blagden, who had had a share in young M——'s downfall, on acquiring his confidential position in the firm, sought to supplant the son totally, and to be made heir to the business. Failing in this, and lacking money for his vices, he made free of the office till to the extent of some five thousand pounds. Twenty years' penal servitude in one of the Island settlements was the price he paid for taking this liberty. As he was being led from the dock, Blagden shouted to Mr. M—— in open court that he would be even with him some day. To which menace the old gentleman replied that it did not seem at all likely Blagden would be given the opportunity.

Some months later, young M—— in one of his dissipated sprees, got into trouble with the authorities, and was promptly locked up. The magistrate, sitting next day, committed him to the Assizes; and Mr. M——, senior, already stung to the quick by the public disgrace attaching itself to his family, lost control of himself; and, declaring it was well known that the magistrate, a Mr. F. Miller, was a personal enemy of his, swore revenge against Miller. Whether or not any personal animosity underlay the case, the young man was eventually acquitted of the charge in question.

On the fateful forenoon, however, his father, after uttering his threat in public, went home, loaded his pistols and took horse for his enemy's house, expecting to find him at tiffin and having a duel there and then. On the way he met the magistrate's brother, John Miller, and a heated scene ensued. The young man struck M—— with his riding-crop, and old Mr. M——, losing all self-control, shot him dead. Many people had just heard him vowing vengeance against Miller, and both brothers were antagonistic to him; so the old gentleman hurriedly resolved to disappear. Too late he was to realize that such a course only stigmatizes in the public eye, the individual concerned as guilty.

Many vessels, bound for all parts, were almost daily leaving St. George's and Hamilton—it was extremely easy for any man, rich or poor, to get away. After a few weeks, more or less, close search the police arrived at the conclusion that Mr. M—— had taken ship. Later, however, an anonymous letter prompted the authorities to renew their quest in M——'s own house. There they found that which was known only to Mr. M—— and to him who had been his confidential clerk, Blagden. Under the dining-room table lay a trap-door giving access to a vault—a hiding-place during the negro insurrections some fifty years previously. Here Mr. M—— was found, but so haggard and changed in appearance that it was hard to recognize him.

He was tried, and condemned to death on the block—hanging as the capital punishment not yet having reached the Bermudas; but at first an executioner could not be found. His duties were so hateful to the Islanders that whoever carried them out must needs be disguised by a hideous mask and a congeries of woman's costume.

He who at last was hired as executioner behaved with such indecency and gaiety, leaping and laughing and dancing in his hideous masquerade before the prisoner as he was led on to the scaffold, that he had to be sternly reprimanded amidst the hisses of the spectators. As, however, Mr. M—— laid his head upon the block, the executioner, stooping down, pulled his mask aside —and showed the malignant features of the erstwhile clerk—Blagden.

"I told you I'd be even with you, and I am!" the Creole yelled as he struck the fatal blow. Then picking up the gouting head, he greeted it with a cry of satiated hatred, such as only a frenzied being can utter. The crowd surged up, and he would have been torn to pieces, lunatic as he had become, if the military had not held off the Bermudians. And so high did feeling run on the matter that the public was placated only after several officials had been severely censured publicly, and the promise been given that Blagden should be confined for life in his headsman's garb.

And confined he was. But it was on Cedar Island. Here Blagden was marooned in such circumstances as no Crusoe has ever been placed, since the first historic castaway, Pietro Sorrana, found himself on his barren islet.

A small clearing was made in the middle of the dense wood of odorous cedars, a path leading to it from the creek, where today as then azure wavelets lap softly over a garden of lovely corals. A lean-to was knocked together as protection against the night dews and the weather. And to it the mad Creole was brought without trouble, having been heavily dosed, mercifully, with laudanum in his food. A stout copper chain was riveted round his waist, and the end of it nailed round a sturdy cedar alongside the shed. And the maniac was left to enact somewhat of the part of Robinson Crusoe—with this exception, that water and victuals were regularly put within his reach except when dirty weather hindered a landing.

In a very short time Blagden became neither more nor less than a wild beast—and a very terrible beast, at that. He lost the power of human speech, also.

Cedar Island, one of the smallest of the Bermoothes or Somers Islands (called after Sir George Somers, the first colonist in 1610)—a jewel of a jeweled group—became invested with all that dread with which the Elizabethans endued them as the Devil's Islands. The Bermudians' great-grandfathers were not cruel; they merely lacked in progress, and in the application of the sense of mercy—or they had made of Cedar Island a show-place such as existed less than a generation ago in the Gulf of Honduras. But, unlike the half-caste maniac-murderer on his palmetto cay there, the Creole was shunned by all and sundry. He dree'd his weird in solitude, and apart from idle prying eyes.

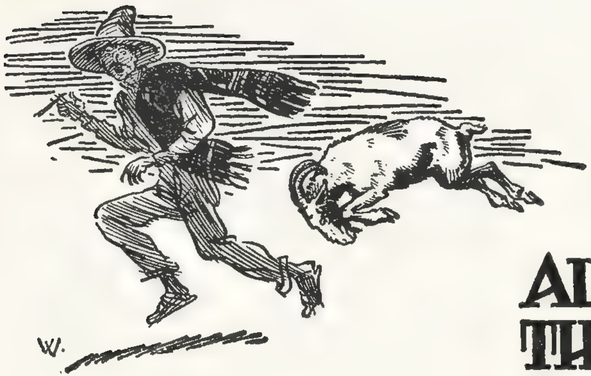
Occasionally, however, he had an official visitor, who satisfied himself as to Blagden's existence—if the being that sat in the small clearing, and gibbered with a curious clatter of his teeth could be called Blagden.

One account states that he would have been set down at once as a specimen of the gorilla. A long and ragged black beard covered his face almost up to his eyes; his bare hairy arms beat a monotonous measure on his lap; and his hands more resembled talons. On his head he still wore the woman's headgear in which he had been attired for Mr. M——'s execution, but torn and frayed and filthy to an extraordinary degree, as were the petticoats, tattered and draggled. Bones were strewn about in plenty within the radius his length of chain allowed him to move; and when he drank at the runlet, sunk in the ground, the Creole went down on all fours like a dog and sipped the water.

Close to his shed there stood a stump of cedar, and on it he was accustomed to enact the crowning scene in his life of revenge.

Blagden would take up a small billet of wood, and, slinking up to the stump, appear to stare at something on it, with an air of mockery and insult. He would point at it, spurn it with his naked foot, and gibber at it. Then, throwing back his head, and showing his evil face swollen with fury and hatred, with all his strength he would bring down the billet with a tremendous thwack across the stump, even as he uttered a terrible cry of exulting fiendish triumph. There came a day, though, when the negro boatmen threading the bordering seaways heard no more that blood-curdling cry.

Did Charles Louis Blagden, the mad Crusoe, die like a beast? His last attitude, it is said, was that of a supplicant in prayer.



ALAMOGORDO THE GREAT

by Thomas Topham

Author of "The Revenge of Don Emilio," "The Bully of Zamora," etc.

COME here, Alamogordo! Aha, that is it. Snuggle your face against my shoulder. You treacherous beast! You would chew my 'kerchief, would you? Take that and that! Ah, my noble friend, do not weep. Perhaps I struck too hard. Come back to your papá.

See, señor, does he not obey me like a child? Can you not see that he loves me? And, *amigo*, I love him, even though he is only a goat and one that smells like *el diablo*.

Ah, *amigo mio*, look at the rascal scamper! And gaze upon my 'kerchief! Did he not grab it neatly? He knows that he had better get from my sight or he might die like a dog. I trust that the dyes in the 'kerchief, which are very brilliant, will not injure his digestion, for, señor, were anything to happen to Alamogordo, I should be a desolate man.

You ask me why I love a goat? Ah, señor, Alamogordo is no ordinary goat. Oh, no, and one must love something. He is the apple of my eye, the flower of my soul. We understand one another, and sooner would I part with my right hand than part with that noble animal.

Look about you, señor. You behold a beautiful rancho. A house, a barn, a corral, men working in the fields, everything that one could desire. All of this is mine, señor, and I am humble enough to give the credit to this goat that you say smells to high heaven. Permit him to smell, señor, of a certainty. And if he cares to share my bed with me, he has but to express that wish.

You are astonished, señor, that a simple goat could do this for a man? You do not know my Alamogordo. He has the high intelligence of the Evil One, the cunning of a serpent, the wisdom of a philosopher and a love for me that passes all understanding. Do not, I beg you, *amigo*, judge him by the ordinary standards of a goat.

No, señor, I did not raise this goat. He came to me in a strange manner, by a stroke of fate. I was very poor at one time. Of a certainty, I and my faithful wife had nothing. I, who had been educated in Mexico City as a soldier, had sunk to the level of a peon through the misfortunes of wars that long afflicted our land.

Unsuccessful in war, having chosen the side of the government, I had been glad to escape with my life, and with my wife and two *niños* I had taken tenancy upon the Rancho de Cordoba, where I had a plot of ground and nothing more, for the house we occupied could not be dignified by the name of dwelling. Of a certainty, *amigo*, when I tilled the soil I was compelled to borrow a mule and many an idle day did I pass because the borrowing was poor.

IT WAS at this time that I and my wife decided to attend the Fiesta de la Rosa at San Ygnacio to give the *niños* an outing. One can not deny his children all pleasures in life, señor, and so it was that by much devising my wife and I succeeded in selling two pieces of our poor furniture for a few pesos.

With this money we went to the fiesta. Ah, *amigo*, had you seen the delight of the *niños* you would have realized that the sacrifice of our furniture was as nothing compared to their joy. They reveled in the sight of the gay crowds, the numerous huge attractions and the sweets that we purchased them to eat. Tired and happy, they with their mother sank upon a bench at the Plaza to listen to the band as it played "La Paloma," while I, who was still not weary, wandered away for a brief time to see if I could, perhaps, meet some old friends.

A maiden who was very fair approached me shortly after I had left my little family to rest, and offered to me tickets for what she was pleased to term "the grand lottery." There were many prizes, she assured me; rifles and sombreros and game-cocks and many other articles of an attractiveness.

Señor, I heard her call over this list and my heart leaped. I had never owned a game-cock, for you must know that they are not to be purchased for a trifle. Here certainly was a noble opportunity to acquire a game-cock for an insignificant sum compared to its worth. Would I not look well, I thought, returning to my home with a brave game-cock under my arm? Would not my friends be envious? Perhaps he could even defeat the cock of the *sobrestante* upon the Rancho de Cordoba, which would bring to me much money and honor. And the tickets for the lottery were but one peso each.

So it was that in haste I invested our last two pesos for two tickets, hoping that at least one of them would bring to me a superb game-cock.

Señor, a woman's mind is a strange thing. Can you imagine it, within a few minutes my wife rushed up to me and demanded money with which to purchase tortillas for the children? I reached into my pocket and brought forth nothing.

"Loafer," shrieked my wife, "you have been gambling. What have you to show for our money with which we were to see all the sights of the fiesta?"

"Desist from your unseemly tirade," I bade the woman sternly. "I have invested our money and you may be the wife of a rich man as the result. You may even have a machine that talks and sings or a carriage that is not drawn by a mule. My faithful wife, you do not realize the good things that may be in store for you."

No, señor, I did not mention to my wife my own longing for a game-cock. She, a woman, would never have understood.

"You have purchased these things?" demanded my wife, her eyes wide with surprize. "Of a certainty your fortunes at monte must have been very unusual."

This, señor, was a very unfair attack upon my skill, but I allowed it to pass unchallenged. I am, you must understand, as successful as any one at monte. Many a time I have made huge winnings of which my wife was unaware. A man does not tell everything to his wife, señor.

"I have not purchased these trifles as yet," I told my wife, "but of a truth they shall be yours."

Señor, I was not telling an untruth. If I but won a game-cock, who knows? Might I not have taken him and won a very great store of money by his fighting ability? Sufficient to purchase many things for my family, which, *amigo*, was my plan. I am glad to see that you agree with me that a man must take chances in this life if he would get forward. Only a coward keeps his money in his pocket when by risking it he might gain great rewards. This philosophy was once impressed upon me by an Americano who had three shells and a pea. While I was very unfortunate in guessing the location of the pea, still his conversation was well worth the trifling sums that I lost.

But my wife would not be satisfied with my answer. She stamped her foot in anger.

"The *niños* are crying for food," she screamed. "Explain to me what you have done with our money. Your promises are idle lies."

At this I was constrained to tell my wife the facts.

"I have invested my money," I said with dignity, for, señor, a man should never lose his dignity. "See, I have purchased two beautiful tickets for the grand lottery. There is much to be won, a hundred prizes of great value. Do you not perceive that the children must temporarily go without tortillas until we win something in this lottery? Then they shall gorge upon tortillas and enchiladas."

My wife was much mollified by my explanation. She had, it seemed, unknown to me, looked over the list of prizes and having perceived there were two handsome dresses among them, she promptly set her heart upon winning one of them, and if possible, both.

"Promise me," she appealed, "that if we should win something besides the two dresses that it shall be sold and half of the money given to me."

But this I would not promise, having my mind set upon one of the three handsome game-cocks that were to be awarded. You can plainly perceive in what a predicament such a promise would have placed me. My stubbornness irritated my wife. She cried loudly that I was a selfish brute and berated me for taking food from the mouths of my *niños*. While we were arguing this matter, I firm in my course, my wife growing more heated, they began calling that the lottery was started. We turned and ran to the platform, my wife dragging the *niños*.

It was an inspiring sight, *amigo*. Ranged round the platform were almost the entire population of San Ygnacio and those who had come to the fiesta, each eager for one of the handsome prizes. Upon the platform was a wheel within which were placed the tickets corresponding to those we held. A *niña*, her eyes covered by a gay 'kerchief, would turn this wheel and remove a ticket. Then a man would take this ticket and read off the number. He who held this ticket would advance for his prize. I can tell you, señor, it was most exciting.

Trembling in every limb, for I had risked my all, *amigo*, I stood with my tickets in my hand.

I did not win the first prize, which was a wonderful automobile. How I envied the man who, holding that number, rushed up with the crowd making way, and pushed his prize from the platform. Neither did I win the second or the third prize. My heart sank. The man kept calling numbers as the child took them from the wheel and mine was not among them. At the twenty-fifth number I gnashed my teeth as a small, insignificant man was awarded the handsomest of the three game-cocks, and at the thirtieth my wife cried in agony as the dress which she had selected was borne away by a fat woman weeping with joy.

However, I did not sympathize greatly with my wife over her loss, because her desires were born of vanity, while mine, señor, were for the enriching of my entire family.

But there were still many numbers and still two more game-cocks to be awarded. At the fifty-first number, señor, I swear that I came near winning the second game-cock. Señor, the number missed one of my tickets by an even hundred. An insignificant "one" added in the right place would have made me the possessor of the game-cock that a large man was even then carrying down from the platform, his face beaming with joy.

But still there was one more game-cock, and I did not lose hope. And, señor, at the sixty-third drawing I was paralyzed to hear the man reading the very number that I held on one of my cards.

I rushed to the platform, certain that I had won the third and last game-cock, but again I was paralyzed.

Señor, the man led forth for me a goat! Señor, it was Alamogordo!

The crowd roared rudely when this goat reared up at sight of me and uttered an unseemly "ba-a-a-a" in my face.

FOR a moment I was on the point of refusing this prize and demanding the return of my two pesos. But my hesitation was perceived by the goat, which backed up and would have butted me from the platform had I not been quick on my feet. I dodged, señor, with my usual nimbleness and this goat struck fairly with his head against the man who was reading the numbers.

Señor, there was a terrific uproar. The crowd would have mobbed the goat and perhaps me, but I grasped the rope about this goat's neck and bestowed a hearty kick upon his middle portion. It was fortunate that I had on shoes. This kick astonished the goat. He turned and eyed me as if he would repeat his charge, whereupon I kicked him in the chin and he perceived that he had met his master. He bleated pathetically.

At this point the man who had been awarding the prizes crawled back to the platform, having been knocked into the crowd.

"You will remove your prize," he said coldly to me, "otherwise you, being the legal owner of this animal, shall be held responsible for his acts. If he shall butt me once more I shall have you and your property incarcerated in the *carcel*."

"Beware of your tongue," I bade this

insolent fellow, "or I shall direct this noble goat of mine to administer another and more crushing blow to you."

I gave my new property a hearty kick to start him on his way, for I did not fancy preceding him, and stepped from the platform with as much dignity as is possible when one is holding a rope to which is attached a goat. You may be sure that a path was made for us, as this goat seemed intent upon attacking every one whom he saw and only my strong arm held him in leash.

With much difficulty I reached my wife and *niños*. The *niños* were delighted, but my wife regarded my new goat with a sour face.

"It will do us no good," she declared, "as it is not a goat which will supply the *niños* with milk to make them strong. Why, if you were intent upon winning a goat, could you not have the intelligence to win one of some value?"

Was not that foolish, *amigo?* One would think that I had selected this animal from the list of prizes, when, if my wife had but known the truth, I would willingly have traded it for the poorest of the three gamecocks. So to mollify her, I gave her the remaining ticket, which she clutched tightly until the lottery was at an end. But she won nothing.

When the last number had been drawn and the crowd began to disperse, my wife insisted that I attempt to trade my prize for one of the dresses, which had been won by a man near us, but this attitude aroused my manhood.

"Woman," I declared with a firmness, "fate has placed this animal in my keeping. I shall remain true to him. He shall be known as San Ygnacio after the town that gave him to me, and shall become a part of my household."

It was thus, señor, that I proposed to maintain myself as the lord of my house. While I did not desire this goat, and did not know what I should do with him, of a certainty I was not to allow a woman to dictate to me whether or not I should have a goat. If I wanted a goat, of a truth, señor, was I not entitled to a goat? The constitution of our glorious republic gave me that right, and I would shed my blood at any time to maintain my rights.

Seeing that my decision to keep this goat was unalterable, my wife wisely did not attempt to cross me. But she would not allow me a complete victory.

"He shall not be known as San Ygnacio," she declared hotly. "I will not have a goat that is called by the name of the town where you basely betrayed me with promises of rich dresses and a machine that talks. He shall be known as Alamogordo."

"Such a name," I said witheringly. "I have never heard such a name, especially for a goat." I demanded to know where she had found such a name, for it means nothing, especially as applied to a goat.

"I shall not move from this spot," screamed my wife, "until you have agreed that our goat's name shall be Alamogordo."

So soon did my wife claim part ownership of Alamogordo, whom she had at first utterly spurned.

So it was that we left San Ygnacio with Alamogordo, who, urged by a few well-placed kicks, ran ahead of us with me tugging at his rope. The *niños* were tired and hungry and we had a long distance to walk. It was late that night when we arrived at our home, the *niños* crying and my wife scolding. The goat was a great burden to me, as he persisted in running ahead and jerking upon the rope. Several times I was in mind to throw away the rope and allow him his liberty, but the remembrance of my wife's stinging words made me persist despite all obstacles.

When at last we reached our humble home I tied the rope to a post, and eating a bowl of frijoles and a tortilla, I cast myself upon my pallet. My arms ached sorely and I was very weary, so that it seemed but a moment until I was awakened by my wife rudely poking me in the ribs. I opened my eyes sleepily. Daylight was streaming in. I turned, rubbed my eyes and behold! The door was open as my wife had negligently left it and Alamogordo was standing in the room chewing one of my new shoes which I had thrown aside upon retiring.

I did not care particularly for the shoe, *amigo*, for sandals are much more comfortable, but the terrific boldness of this animal aroused me to a fury. He had chewed his rope, and I am constrained to believe had eaten most of it, for such is his inordinate appetite.

I leaped to my feet and unthinkingly bestowed a hearty kick upon this goat, then I howled in agony.

While I was attending my great toe,

which I assure you, señor, has never recovered its normal position and still pains me after great exertions, my wife discovered that our prize from the San Ygnacio lottery had helped himself while we slept to a huge quantity of frijoles, our only store of food. Would you believe it, señor, this animal had partaken of at least half a sackful of these precious frijoles?

It was upon this discovery that my wife rushed upon Alamogordo with a great fierceness. She belabored him with a piece of wood, and the craven animal that could have, with one sweep of his head, sent her flying, turned tail and with a loud snort, went leaping out the door, followed by the stick of wood.

"Begone!" shrieked my wife, and then she turned upon me. "Behold!" she cried, "what you have done by investing in this miserable goat. He has eaten our food and would have wrecked our home but for my timely interference. You must show that you are a man and slaughter this menace to our household."

Of a certainty, señor, that had been my intention when I perceived this goat eating my shoe, but my wife's shrill words determined me that I should not be ordered about by a woman. In due course of time I should get rid of this goat, but I would not be hurried and would not allow my wife to believe that she had influenced my decision.

I went without the house, hoping that this goat would have disappeared, but he had no such purpose. He basely attempted to murder me, his master, having hidden himself behind a corner of the house. I assure you, señor, that it was only by the fleetness of my foot that I saved my life. Twice I beat him in running around the house, and perceiving that I was fast becoming exhausted I dashed into a small 'dobe shed, the roof of which had long since caved in. This goat followed, but I leaped to the top of the roofless wall and there found safe refuge.

Seeing that I was beyond his reach, the goat desisted from his pursuit and went without the shed, where he busied himself in chewing on some sacks that had been thrown aside.

I was so angry now, señor, that had I had a weapon I would have murdered Alamogordo in cold blood. I crawled farther along the top of the wall and encountered a large piece of wood that had once been a part of the decayed roof. It made an excellent club. With this in hand I slipped down the wall on the opposite side from the goat, and peeking around the corner perceived that he was still attempting to eat the sacks.

I crept forth craftily, and slipping forward I swung my club and brought it down upon Alamogordo's head with a thundering whack.

I NEVER hit a goat on the head, *amigo*. You can kick one in the mouth and perhaps succeed in subduing him, but I assure you a goat's head is hard. The blow that I expected would kill Alamogordo served only to injure my two hands. Of a truth they were numb up to my elbows for an hour. And this goat merely made a dash at me in a new attack. I leaped and he struck the house, rocking it to its foundations, and then it was that victory came to me. My faithful wife, perceiving my desperate effort to slay the goat and my failure, came to my rescue with a large iron bar and belabored him over the back until he ran for his life.

Thanking my wife for her timely aid, I took the iron from her and went after Alamogordo. I was determined to subdue him, and this I did successfully. Señor, when I had finished he was a repentant goat. Then I attached a chain to his neck, and I tied him to a post and deliberated what I should do. My wife still urged his execution, in which I should have heartily agreed except that my mind had been made up to preserve him and perhaps start a goat farm. Many a man, *amigo*, has founded a fortune on a goat farm.

However, it requires much money to embark upon goat farming, so I allowed the enterprise to languish, and Alamogordo became simply a part of our family. He was a constant subject of debate between me and my wife, and we argued hotly upon many occasions as to his future.

But in the meantime, upon closer acquaintance, I had discovered that Alamogordo was an extremely intelligent goat and affectionate to a degree. He recognized me as his master and desisted from his attacks upon my person. It became my habit to wander with this goat so that he could forage, and I would lie in the shade until he had his fill, whereupon he would return to me and lie down beside me. Many a happy hour, señor, we spent dozing in the shade, and I became greatly attached to this goat.

It was not long, *amigo*, before we understood each other thoroughly. I discovered that Alamogordo's intelligence was astounding. We played games together, he pretending that he would butt me from the face of the earth and stopping gently before he would strike. And again, when I would point to an object, this goat would attack it with a fierceness, whether it were tree or rock or animal. But this trick I was compelled to use with caution, for upon one occasion when I innocently pointed at my faithful wife, ah, señor, it was distressing. Of a truth, Alamogordo knocked her half way through the house, which caused her great annoyance. Of a certainty, señor, my pointing at my wife was merely a gesture and not an invitation to Alamogordo, but I could not hold it against him, as he believed that he was faithfully carrying out my orders. But to this day, señor, such is the perversity of women, my wife believes that I purposely invited Alamogordo to attack her.

Her rage at the time was very unseemly. She demanded again that I murder Alamogordo, which I refused with a sternness. Could I murder a friend? Ah, *amigo mio*, it would have been like murdering one of my *niños*. At my refusal my wife berated me fiercely and declared that I was feeding a worthless animal and spending my time with him when I should be working to support my family.

"Have a care, woman," I bade her. "I may take it into my head to point my finger at you again, and I assure you that if Alamogordo is looking he will knock you entirely through the house upon this occasion."

So my wife, knowing that I had the upper hand in this affair, desisted. Certainly, señor, she was not according me full credit when she accused me of not working. Never did I shirk work and many a time I have sought it. I ploughed and I planted, but of a certainty weeds grow quickly and frequently far outgrow crops. And could I be blamed for that? Surely that is fate.

However, evil days crept upon us. Despite my strenuous efforts our larder grew thinner and thinner. Our crops failed and we became so deeply in debt that the hard-hearted *administrador* refused us further credit and talked darkly of throwing us out of our humble home. My wife wept and wailed.

"We have sold all that can be sold," she cried. "Our beautiful furniture is gone, we have but a poor pallet upon which to sleep. There are but a few frijoles left and nothing from which I can mix tortillas. We shall starve."

It was true. We had reached a point of desperation. With sadness in my heart I called to Alamogordo to take him where he could forage. Surely, because we were starving was no reason he should starve, when his food was to be had for the picking.

We wandered, Alamogordo and I, across the hills. I was in deep thought and sad to a degree. Alamogordo attempted to cheer me by playfully pretending that he would butt me, but I had no heart for games. I contemplated him with a melancholy, for it had entered my mind that I must sacrifice Alamogordo for the sake of my family. Surely he would bring me a few pesos, a noble goat such as he, sleek and fat. I wept bitter tears as I thought of parting from my friend, but I firmly determined that it must be. I should go back and impart this decision to my wife.

I was astounded at the manner in which my wife received this news that we must part with Alamogordo.

"So you have come to your senses?" said my faithful wife. "At last you have decided that your family is more important than a miserable goat. It is well."

Amigo mio, my wife's words left me bitter. Alamogordo was not a miserable goat. My heart was sore as I reflected that he would probably be slain and sold as lamb in the market.

But what can one do in an emergency? He must do the best he can. It was imperative that we have food. Alamogordo was our only asset. Logic would tell you the result of such a situation. In the early dawn I departed for San Ygnacio with Alamogordo. But while I was sad and depressed, Alamogordo was happy and skipped like a lark over the fields. I did not need the chain for him, nor so much as a rope. One word, and he would come to heel like a dog, trot there obediently until I bade him begone. Truly, he was one goat in a million.

SO IT was that I came into San Ygnacio. I proceeded up the street, hot and dry from my long walk, and I looked longingly into the cool and inviting *cantinas*. But I could not enter. I had no money, and señor, *cantineros* are hard-hearted men with whom to deal. I turned down the street that led to a butcher's whom I knew, for, señor, I was aware of no other place to dispose of this goat.

As I turned into the street I became confused as to my location, and I halted a passing stranger. I asked him, politely, the direction of the butcher.

"It is this way," he said, facing to the north.

"This way?" I indicated, pointing.

"*Sí, señor*," he replied, and as he spoke there was a flash beside me and a man who was ahead of me bit the dust.

Señor, it was Alamogordo come into action. Unwittingly I had pointed north and had pointed directly at the back of an utter stranger. And Alamogordo, trained to attack that at which I pointed, had acted.

It was certainly laughable, señor. I was roaring out my applause when the stranger arose, and rubbing himself vigorously, demanded with great heat why I had allowed my animal to attack him. I protested that it was but the innocent prank of a country goat and apologized profusely. I attempted to explain.

"See," I said, "I thoughtlessly pointed at you and my goat, believing that you were an enemy, attacked you. It is a matter of small moment."

But this explanation did not soothe this excitable man.

"Of a certainty he has ruined a pair of trousers for me," he cried loudly. "It is a matter of great moment. But pay for the trousers, which cost me twenty pesos, and I shall absolve you. I shall not hold my personal injuries, which are grievous, against you."

Twenty pesos! Think of it, señor! Twenty pesos and I did not have a centavo in my pocket. It would have been laughable had it not been that a crowd had gathered and an officer of the law approached.

The man who had been struck by Alamogordo seized upon this officer, excitedly told him what had occurred. He pointed repeatedly to these trousers of his, and I am certain, señor, that for two pesos any tailor would have sewed up the rent in them. After much conversation, during which the crowd jeered and laughed by turns, this officer seized me by the arm.

"I am constrained to remove you to the *carcel*," he declared, "unless you shall immediately pay this man twenty-five pesos."

"Twenty-five pesos!" I cried. "He but now offered to absolve me for twenty."

"It is now twenty-five," said the officer sternly.

"Aha," said I, "and you would profit by five pesos over this unfortunate affair."

My words were electric. The officer hit me sharply.

"March to the *carcel*," he ordered.

Señor, in a flash the solution of this difficulty appeared to me.

"Miserable oppressor of the helpless," I shouted at the officer, and pointed my finger at him.

Señor, you know the answer.

Alamogordo struck this officer in the stomach, fairly, and with a great gasp and a grunt the man who would have profited by an innocent prank went spinning. The crowd scattered. The officer turned over and got on his hands and knees.

I pointed again.

Another flash.

Bam!

This officer's face ploughed into the street as he went sprawling for the second time.

"Is there any one who would say something," I demanded, turning haughtily to the scattered crowd.

No one would speak. I called Alamogordo and stalked away, down the street to sell my beloved Alamogordo, who had just saved me twenty-five pesos and possibly a night in the *carcel*.

I walked a short distance. Alamogordo minced at my heels. But turning, I beheld some men running toward me. They came on and I perceived they were three policemen. Of a certainty, I could see that I was going to the *carcel* despite all my brave endeavors.

They came up to me.

"Halt!" ordered one of the policemen. "We have been called to arrest you and your goat who have just attempted to murder one of our brave companions."

Señor, I was in a terrific predicament. Three against one and they were armed. I resolved to die like a man. I pointed my finger at the three.

"Do not—" I began, but I could not finish my sentence.

I must say for Alamogordo, señor, that he did his best and his failure to lay low all three of my enemies should not be held against him. He got two of them very neatly and the third turned and ran.

Again the crowd, which had just scattered, came pell-mell after us. As they saw the attack of Alamogordo lay the officers low they broke into cheers.

"*Viva! Viva!*" The shouts rang out.

The cheers emboldened me.

"Come, my brave men," I cried. "Two of our enemies are completely disabled," and I pointed to the two groaning officers. "The third is fleeing. Shall we allow him to escape?"

"No, no," the crowd shouted, and turning, I started after the fleeing officer with Alamogordo bounding along joyously and my new friends yelling as they too ran. But, my goodness, señor, what a runner that policeman was. He kept well ahead and we could not overtake him, and he dashed straight for the office of the *jefe politico*. He broke into the door with myself and Alamogordo and our friends in hot pursuit.

Well satisfied with our exploit, I tarried for a moment debating upon our retreat. As I stood, indecisive, the officer who had been routed appeared in the door with two more men and the three, leveling revolvers, fired at my beloved Alamogordo.

SEÑOR, my goat showed his true colors. He uprose on his hind legs like an avenger, and with a snort of supreme contempt, he dashed wildly at the squad of men. I shut my eyes because I did not wish to see him die and I was appalled. You must remember that his loss to me meant that my family would starve. I would get little or nothing for him when the policemen had riddled him with bullets. Perhaps they would not even consent to give me his carcass.

But my eyes opened as a terrible crash resounded. My goodness, señor, what a mess that goat made of the doorway and the three policemen. I opened my eyes in time to see the brave officers picking themselves one by one from the wreckage, with the brave Alamogordo charging about like an avenging angel.

My Alamogordo succeeded in knocking all three of them down twice before they escaped. My friend, how the crowd, which had now grown to enormous proportions, cheered.

Feeling that sufficient damage had been done, and of a truth in some trepidation that I might be called upon to pay for this building as well as the trousers for which payment had been demanded, I hastily ran forward to secure Alamogordo so that I could sell the animal before he should be murdered in cold blood. Much as I rejoiced at his exploits, these uproars in the heart of San Ygnacio would inevitably result in my Alamogordo being secured and possibly myself thrown in jail.

As I say, I dashed forward and called to Alamogordo. He stopped his snorting and came to me obediently. As I turned to depart a voice accosted me—

"Señor, I surrender!"

I looked about me. Coming forward was a small man, his hands in the air. I was astounded.

"Surrender?" I said questioningly.

"Unconditionally," said the man and looked apprehensively at the mob around me—and the goat. "Your army has conquered our entire police force. Your terms shall be met."

"Terms?" I asked, for still I did not understand.

Several men advanced from the crowd. One of them spoke to me:

"*Señor el general*," he said, "this man is the *jefe politico*, our oppressor, and a very evil man. Shall we not hang him and then go forward with this glorious revolution that you have inaugurated? There are many guns and much ammunition here with which to arm ourselves, and we have long awaited this moment. The hour has struck."

Amigo, Alamogordo had butted me into the middle of a revolution. I was bewildered at this turn of events, but not for long. My old military training came to the fore. I turned upon the trembling *jefe*.

"I accept your surrender," I said haughtily. "I am a civilized man and you shall be treated as a prisoner of war. Produce the arms you have that we may use them in our glorious movement for the liberation of our fatherland."

Was not that a noble answer, señor?

You can see that I was quick to grasp an opportunity to better myself.

The *jefe* was moved to sudden activity. He unlocked a room and there were rifles in number more than to supply the ninety-four men who pressed forward eagerly. Glad cries of acclaim greeted my action in bidding the men help themselves, which they did quickly. The man who had told me that my prisoner was the *jefe* was very active. I accosted him.

"Your name?" I demanded.

"Rudolfo Sanchez," he told me.

"Colonel Rudolfo Sanchez," I said, "you shall be my chief aide. See that the men are well armed, divide them into two companies, appoint a captain of each and we shall be ready for our next move. Are there soldiers about?"

"A company of federal soldiers, about twenty-five, at the *cuartel*," my new colonel informed me. "We shall easily wipe them from the earth and proceed to greater victories."

"First," I declared, "I must have a hundred pesos as a reward to my goat for his brave charge upon the enemy."

"A thousand," declared Colonel Sanchez, and together we searched the *jefe's* offices. In a small safe that we forced the *jefe* to open we found a large number of pesos. I counted out a thousand pesos for Alamogordo, a thousand for myself and a thousand for Colonel Sanchez, after which we divided equally the remaining seven hundred pesos among our brave followers. They acclaimed our liberality, promising that they would die in our cause.

While we were busily making our plans the cry went up that the *soldados* were advancing, having been, I suspected, called by the policemen who had escaped. Calling Alamogordo to my side, I took my position at the head of my brave company and giving the orders, we moved down the street to battle.

We made a noble showing, señor, despite our quick assembly. All of my men had been soldiers at some time and they were happy to get back into the field. When I told them I had been a warrior they cheered me heartily.

But I found to my sorrow, *amigo*, that one must have a disciplined army to achieve success. Brave as these men were at heart, they had not been coordinated into an army. Their maneuvers were awkward. When I ordered them to deploy in skirmish formation they did not obey hastily. The troops, advancing, fired a volley. One of my poor men went down with a shot in the leg and my brave army vanished as the mist before the blazing sun. It was pitiful.

No, señor, I did not run. I had not had time to run, and of a truth it would not have looked well for the commander of an army to have taken to his heels.

So I STOOD there with Alamogordo at my side, dazed at the quick turn of events, and the *soldados*, running up, overpowered me and took me prisoner. I bade Alamogordo be quiet, for fear that both of us would be shot, and he stood calmly beside me, willing I knew to fight to the death at my word.

"Ah, ha," said the colonel who commanded these troops, "so you and your goat thought to upset the constitution, perhaps rule in a palace?"

I said nothing in reply.

"You shall both be shot," hissed this colonel, who I afterward learned was Colonel Martinez, a man of evil reputation as an oppressor. "The general of the district is here inspecting the army and you shall be taken before him at once. I can guarantee, I assure you, that you shall face a firing squad and that your goat shall furnish my men a welcome meal tomorrow."

Thus he talked, señor, of my beloved Alamogordo. My heart sank. Surely, with me shot and Alamogordo furnishing a meal for the soldiers, my faithful wife and helpless *niños* at home should perish. With their two protectors gone they would face a cruel world. It was almost more than I could bear.

We were marched forward and I was taken before this general, who was accompanied by his staff of three colonels and several captains. He was, of a certainty, of a fierceness, with mustache that bristled and a frown on his brow that told of the weighty matters that he had on his mind.

The general looked hard at me and at my rags, for I was not clothed then, señor, as you see me now.

"So this is the mighty revolutionist, who with his goat, defeated the entire police force of San Ygnacio and then gathered an army to march upon Mexico City?" spoke the general with a sneer in his voice. "Of a certainty he shall be shot at once. A trial is unnecessary."

Thus I was condemned to die. But I could not die without a word. I raised my head to tell this general my pitiful story.

"Of a truth, *señor el general*, perhaps I deserve to die," I said bravely, "but my goat, I implore that you spare his life, that you send him back to my little family as their protector—"

"Where is this goat?" demanded the general. "I would see this famous goat. Colonel Martinez, produce this goat."

Colonel Martinez, you must remember, was the officer who had accepted my surrender. He had the temerity to argue with a general.

"*Señor el general*," said Colonel Martinez, "he is but a common goat, and I have sent him to the corral to be slaughtered."

I groaned in anguish.

"Produce this goat," thundered the general.

You may be sure there was a scurrying on the part of Colonel Martinez. He rushed without and he came back leading Alamogordo. My heart leaped that he was still alive.

Alamogordo was very gentle and seemed to apprehend that grave affairs were on hand. Upon seeing me he walked majestically to my side and rubbed against me.

"He does not seem to be a fierce goat," said the general, rubbing his chin.

"He is not a goat of a fierceness," I declared. "This brave colonel here who captured me will testify to that," and I pointed to Colonel Martinez to indicate my conqueror.

Señor, the effect was terrific.

Alamogordo knocked that colonel at whom I had pointed against the wall of the room so hard that I feared for the wall. A bundle of papers that was in the colonel's pocket flew out and scattered around the room, but unheeding, although he greatly loved papers to chew, Alamogordo turned and started a war upon the other officers without my sanction.

The general made a mad dash from the room while Alamogordo was downing another colonel, and Alamogordo, perceiving his flight, leaped through the door and started in pursuit. Never did Alamogordo approve of one flying. It was as fuel to his anger. He pursued the general madly. I dashed after my goat, for I knew that unless he was caught the general might be killed, and *amigo*, it is a serious matter to slay a general. I arrived just in time. The general was fast losing his breath, although he had made a brave run. He turned in a circle and as Alamogordo came back toward me in pursuit I leaped and caught him. In a moment my soothing words had calmed Alamogordo.

The general stopped when he saw that the goat had been subdued. He quickly ordered several soldiers to take charge of me.

"You will take them both out and shoot them quickly," commanded the general.

I turned sadly, and as I turned one of the colonels on the staff of the general came running from the door. He waved some papers wildly at the general.

"Hold, my general, hold!" he cried, and came dashing up.

"What is it?" demanded the general.

"*Señor el general*," gasped the colonel, "but gaze upon this paper."

The general read and I could see his face turn pale.

"Produce this man in the room," he thundered, "and you will also bring along this goat."

We entered behind the general. The room was in confusion. The table had been overturned. Colonel Martinez was lying unconscious where he had struck the wall after Alamogordo's fierce charge. Another member of the general's staff was picking up more papers that had flown from the bundle in Colonel Martinez's pocket.

The colonel who had been picking up these papers turned to the general.

"*Señor el general*," he said, "this fellow Colonel Martinez had, of a certainty, planned a huge revolution as his papers show. He and the *jefe politico* of San Ygnacio were prepared to arm many men. And behold! Here is a paper which tells of a plan to assassinate you and your staff upon your visit here. Of a certainty we were in dire danger and were ignorantly going to our death at the hands of a traitor until this man's goat so rudely exposed the plot by scattering the papers of Colonel Martinez."

The general sat down and he regarded myself and Alamogordo a long time.

"He is, of a truth, a goat whose odor proclaims him," declared the general at last, "but he has won for you a noble reward by exposing a traitor. You shall have the fine *rancho* of Colonel Martinez. It is a pledge I make, that the government shall take it from his heirs and award it to you. And I command you to cherish this goat, for his name is inscribed among the heroes of our fatherland."

Ah, señor, you can guess how I saluted Alamogordo. I kissed this noble goat on the forehead and he licked my face. He had brought honor to me and riches, and well he deserved the noble words spoken of him. But I too deserved something. Had I not trained this goat to perform in emergencies? I bowed to the general. In gracious words I thanks him.

"But do not forget, *señor el general*," I said, "that I spent many weary hours in training this goat to act as I directed. Day after day I labored under mammoth difficulties, but at last I succeeded in making him obey my slightest wish."

I THREW out my hands in a noble gesture, for, señor, gestures add much to the effectiveness of a speaker, and I pointed my hand at my chest to impress this general that all credit was not due to the goat.

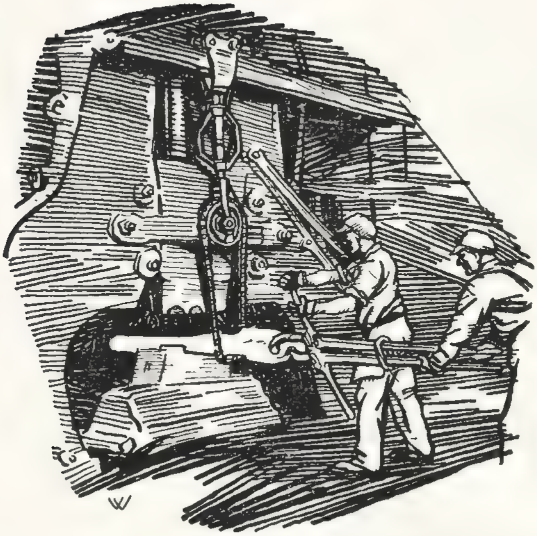
Ah, señor, it was a fatal gesture. My Alamogordo mistook this gesture, trained as he was to obey without any argument.

Amigo, when I picked myself up the general and his staff were laughing at me. Having on a pair of stout shoes I kicked Alamogordo in the chin to teach him that though he might be a national hero, I was his master. Leading the subdued animal, I saluted the general and stalked forth with my pockets still full of the money I had taken from the *jefe's* safe and ringing in my ears the promise of the general that I should have this great ranch of Colonel Martinez, a promise that was faithfully kept.

Come hither, Alamogordo, my child, and greet the *caballero*.

Oh, señor, a thousand, a million pardons. I am desolated, I am abased in the dust at your feet. Of a certainty I had no intention in pointing at you to indicate to Alamogordo that he was to do more than nuzzle you. It is a tragedy, *amigo mio*, that he should mistake my intention. But I can assure you that the hurt will soon be well and I shall minister to it tenderly. And you must remember, señor, that it is a great honor to be butted by a hero such as Alamogordo. Few goats can butt so effectively.

Gracias, señor, you are indeed forgiving that you will drink with me to the long life and growing power of Alamogordo the Great.



STEEL'S SON

A Complete Novelette

By

Edmund M. Littell

Author of "Spirit of Steel," "The Profaned Shovel," etc.

TROUBLE? The square-mile reservation of Midwest Steel is the stamping ground of trouble! It is born amid the fires of hell; it belches, a raging torrent of liquid fire, from tap-holes into ladles; it spurts, with the hissing force of water from a fire hose, into the oblong cavities of six-foot molds; it "freezes"—to a mere twenty-two hundred degrees of sullen plasticity—and crawls, ponderous and resentful, between the mighty rolls that knead it like so much dough. But men started it—and men finish it. In some cases—the present one, for instance—men even get behind its nefarious devilishness.

Such was the sentiment of Jock Campbell, the huge open hearth superintendent of Midwest Steel. He had started more trouble than any man at Midwest Steel; finished it, too, good times and bad. His neighbor, Lew Reed—

"Sure, men are doin' it," he jeered. "Yer own men, ya big alibi artist! I want steel, I can't chip ten heats o' blooms in a day! Want me to come over an' melt that steel myself?"

Lew Reed was no tiny man himself—except when he ranged himself beside Jock Campbell. He was solid, like a six-foot chunk of the blooms he rolled, his square, dark face gouged deep with marks like those left by a chipper's chisel, his head bald and flat as though he had been cropped off in his own shears. It was his gigantic clothes-wringer of a blooming mill that mangled ten-ton coals of steel into glowing snakes, round-cornered and crawling. His great building, as long as Jock's but filled with different furniture, received every ton of steel that Jock made. Hence the friendly comment.

"My men yer foot!" bawled Jock. "I trust my men—what few I got left. How about yours? Better go an' grease up yer washin' machine, ye fish-tail end of a piped ingot! I'll be sendin' steel over so fast ye'll choke on it!"

"You an' who else?" sneered Lew. But he did go back to his blooming mill and glower about through its gloom-ridden noise for any man who might be acting suspiciously. Especially did he scrutinize his low-browed chippers.

Trouble. Good times and bad. Jock—and Lew as well—preferred to take their troubles in good times. Tonnage then was so enormous, the urge of getting it out was so great, that their men rushed it through before it had a chance to act up. Now, with the torrents of steel dwindled to a trickle, their troubles mounted contrariwise. They had been through many such periods, but each one was worse than the one before. The War was history, with a slump afterward to underscore it; the overnight inflation that followed had collapsed with equal suddenness. This period of the doldrums was positively the worst ever.

Financial writers printed columns of erudite comment upon the "business cycle"

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—and Jock and Lew and the lonely Old Man up in the main office sweat blood trying to keep the fires going. Financiers talked of rates of interest, "the price of money"—and Jock and Lew and Old Man Kemp sat up nights figuring out ways to keep the roofs over their buildings. Only five furnaces going now, five of them out, as cold as the graves of those orders that would not come. The Old Man sick, broken down under the strain of working—for what? Wife dead years ago, his only child, a boy, preferring anything but steel and as far away as he could get—in Africa, his mill as sick as he was. A rotten business, making steel. Let's get out of it, go buy a farm somewhere and raise chickens. All right, but not till the Old Man gets well again—or doesn't. Got to show him we're with him, even if his kid doesn't. Ain't it funny how a man gets crazy about a son that ain't worth nothing? They say he began to take an interest in life the minute he heard his boy was on the way home to him!

THEN down from the main office came an order. A tiny one, but an order. Ten heats of forging blooms. Rush. For Eastern Forge. Ship it in five days. Must be chipped, free from seams, scabs and slivers. Full ingot weight, cropped. All written out on the great sheets that were distributed through the mill—and accompanied by a private whisper into the ears of Jock and Lew:

"Trial order. Haven't shipped them a pound since the War. The Old Man's been after 'em ever since, but he's too sick now to be told about it. Now listen: If we get this order out on time and it's O. K., we get a big tonnage. It'll carry us through the slump."

Eastern Forge. A fine bunch. Why, during the War those fellows were the finest bunch we had on our books. Their inspector was a man, not a ribbon-counter clerk. He didn't take a look at one little seam and reject a bloom, no, sir! He looked the rest of it over. "Sure, that'll pass. Just run your chisel over that spot again. Widen out the chip mark some and it'll go." That was the kind of an outfit to do business with. Let's go! We'll ship them ten heats in four days instead of five! Won't the Old Man be tickled when he gets well enough to know about it? Gone were the rebellious thoughts, gone the doleful smoking of the pipes of worry. Here was some tonnage to get out! Ten heats, only a thousand tons, but Jock and Lew acted as if it were ten thousand tons.

"I want them heats in my place by tamorra night," Lew ordered with a curtness in his voice that was most unfriendly. "Takes time to chip them big blooms an' I only got ten chippers now." He concluded with a threatening glance— "Don't want no scabby steel, either. Get me?"

"Ye don't say so?" bellowed Jock gleefully. "Why, ye sawed-off bloom-tipper, I'll have yer steel made before mornin'." Whereupon he charged down his half-dead floor to get the boys lined up.

Ten heats of steel in five days? A cinch! Hammer and tongs driving is the only way to make steel. That thousand tons would melt itself— But it did not.

The first heat was a beauty, the second exactly the opposite. Metallurgical rejected it with the laconic words that laboratory men use:

"Phos and sul too high. Scrap it."

Another charge down the floor by a bellowing Jock.

"Best melters in the country, an' ye can't put down a simple fifty-five carbon heat! Ye slag-hoppin' blaggards, I'll fire ye an' get some school-boys!"

Red Sullivan, the best first helper that ever dipped a test-spoon, replying with heat:

"They O. K.'d the heat before we tapped it, look at the heat log if ya don't believe me. It ain't my heat after it's tapped!"

The end of the first day, and only one heat. The end of the second, and a grand total of only three heats turned over to the bloomer. Three days left, seven more heats to be tapped, bloomed—and chipped! No wonder Lew called on Jock and threatened to stay and melt the steel himself; no wonder Jock maintained that men were behind this strange reluctance of steel to obey orders. And Lew, when he had frowned thoughtfully at the ten lone chippers that were almost lost in the vacant immensity of the chipping floor at the rear of his building, took Joe Ball outside where they could talk without yelling.

Joe Ball was another big man. He looked soft, somehow, for all the bulk of his shoulders, but he could run those temperamental chippers. The big head that hung forward until it had pulled those shoulders into a stoop that was almost a hump was heavy with knowledge of their speechless moods; the silken hair that covered it had turned white nursing them. A terrible job, chipping. Riding a chattering chisel along a bloom, bearing down on an air-hammer until your bones rattle with its Saint Vitus dance. Brr-r-r-p! like a machine-gun; *s-s-s-sl* like a snake; *ping-g-g-g!* if the bloom is small or *pong-g-g-g!* if it is large. The chips rise, break and fall; a bright channel replaces the hairline mark of a seam like the trail left in sand by an angleworm. It takes high wages—and a lot of coddling—to keep men at it.

"Them chippers ain't goin' to be enough," said Lew when they had put a wall between them and the noise. "Better dig up twenty more right away. Stick 'em in the bunkhouse till this is over."

"Easy," said Joe Ball. His voice was abnormally loud because of his habit of talking against the racket. "They're walkin' the streets huntin' work." He gave Lew a sidelong glance. "But why the bunkhouse?" he asked.

" 'Cause we ain't goin' to have 'em quittin' on us in the middle o' this job," said Lew, adding a brief report of what Jock suspected. "We'll have 'em where we can watch 'em. An' ya better get Employment to stick a couple o' detectives in with 'em," he added darkly.

It was all very well to jeer at Jock because he lost some heats, but Lew knew that it was not Jock's habit. This was a new and strange circumstance to them both; he was bound that it should not occur in his place.

It was the morning of the third day that red-eyed Jock paid a triumphant call upon bleary-eyed Lew. Neither one of them had slept all night; they had stayed on the job to see that steel kept moving. It was Jock who opened the discussion, striding into the door behind a train of newly cast ingots.

"There's yer last heat," he announced with a jubilant ring in his kettle drum of a voice. "Now bloom 'em, ye belly-acher! We stopped our trouble last night."

But Lew, instead of snapping back at him, beckoned with a weary finger, led him into the cubby-hole of an office that crouched in one corner of the monstrous building, and—apologized!

LEW was tired. All night long he had been seeing that the trains of ingots were tucked away in their soaking pits as fast as they arrived. His cranes had clanged back and forth overhead, reaching down to strip the molds from the barely frozen steel; they had snatched up the naked blocks and stowed them away in the half-buried furnaces with movable ceilings that filled the front end of his train-long building. And he watched each and every ingot put to soak. Of course he was tired, but he should be all pepped up, for didn't he have his full tonnage at hand ready for blooming? By nightfall they would all have gone through the mill, and there were two full days remaining for the chippers to work on them. Good steel, too. But—Lew apologized.

"Ya're right an' I'm wrong, Jock," he said quietly. "Who was he?"

He? How did Lew know it was a he?

"Fella name o' Slezik. Laborer in the stock room. He was stickin' phosphorous an' sulphur in the recarburizin' sacks."

No wonder that the heats went wrong between tapping and teeming into molds. Those recarburizing sacks were supposed to contain pure coal dust, carbon that was tossed into the cascade of steel as it plunged down into the ladle with the object of bringing the carbon up. What good did it do to slave over a heat, get the phos and sul down, then have it sneaked back in again?

"Did ya find out who hired him?" Lew asked it with an anxiety that was mighty strange in a fighter.

"No. Boys worked on him some—had to haul him to the hospital when they got through—but he kept his yap shut."

"So we don't know." Lew said it with what might have been a sigh if it hadn't been Lew. "Well, he's got friends that're earnin' some side money, too." He peered about the dusty little office as if he expected to find some of them under the desk. The floods of light that poured in through a window that commanded the soaking pits alternated with gloom as their ceilings were closed upon their incandescence, giving Lew's drawn face a look that might be fear. "Somebody jimmed the bloomer 'smornin'."

If Jock had come over with the idea of saying "I told you so," the thought was completely banished now. All he managed was a flabbergasted "Huh?"

Lew's face flushed with rage.

"Some black-hearted offspring o' steel-spoilin' crooks set back the pointers on the bloomin' mill dial," he raved. "Just enough to fool my screw-down man, the slicker. Whole heat comes out undersize—'leven an' five-eighths square 'stead o' twelve inch full!"

"Forgin' blooms! The blaggards!"

"Sure."

"Well, I'll be—" Jock's voice stopped, and he jumped for the telephone. "Got to start another heat—" he jiggled the hook impatiently, then hung it up with a bang—"an' the girls ain't on the switchboard yet," with an oath. "I'll be back," he promised as he started for the door.

"Stick around," growled Lew, laying a hand on his arm. "I ain't done tellin' ya by a long shot. Ya can send my—messenger boy."

His hesitation, followed by the sarcastic mention of his new employee, had the desired effect. Jock stayed his rush for the door and looked his surprize.

"Yeah, messenger boy! Me! Employment sent him over this mornin', wasn't that sweet of 'em?" His voice changed as near a simper as he could accomplish. " 'Poor Lew, he must be all tired out runnin' round. We'll give him a messenger boy.' An' that ain't all."

He told of his securing twenty more chippers to make up for the delay in getting out the steel, of his placing two detectives with them, of their arrival the night before, the detectives assuming the rôles of chippers.

"One of 'em's in the hospital already," he concluded. "Pile o' billets fell on him—smashed his leg. An' billet piles don't fall without somebody pushin' 'em—not in my place!"

"The snake-eatin' blaggards!"

"Somebody don't want us to ship that order," growled Lew, and this time Jock did not resist the temptation to retort.

"So, ye're wise to it, are ye? Thought it was my bum meltin'."

"Yeah, I'm wise to it. An' I'm into it deeper'n you are, too. Laugh, go on! You got yer steel out, all I got to do is bloom it an' chip it by day after tamorra. Seven heats—eight heats countin' the one ya got to make yet." He gave a laugh himself, one without any humor in it. "Eighty blooms to chip in two days—they'll be too hot to touch till tamorra—even if we didn't have to let 'em cool slow to make 'em soft enough fer a chisel—an' crooks mixed up in the chippers. Yeah, laugh!"

But Jock was in no mood for laughter. Instead, he frowned. The bloomer was all right in its way, but—too dark, deserted and noisy. Nothing in it but machinery, clattering. Cranes, racketing above the soaking pits; the bloomer, battering on an ingot back there; the everlasting *ping-g-g-g!* of chipping chisels on cold steel. Darkness, except when one of the soaking pits out there opened up to let out a flood of light and a white-hot ingot that crawled slowly back toward the chippers, lighting its own way. No men around like on the open hearth, loafing between jobs of work, laughing, even fighting once in a while—or doing a little detective work of their own when trouble like this came up. Oh, yes, there were men in this place, of course, but they were tied to the handles of switches. Up in the pilot-houses of cranes, over in a dark corner by the soaking pits, sitting in the pulpit of the bloomer. Silent, solitary, hidden. Machinery whanging away—and eyes in the darkness watching it. Hidden. All but those swarthy, begoggled half-men who leaned over their rapping air-hammers and looked capable of anything up to murder. And poor old Lew, who could bloom an ingot with his eyes shut and his hands tied behind him, trying to whip this treachery that lurked about in the gloom of his building.

"Let's go over to the hospital an' have another talk with that fella Slezik," he suggested.

"He ain't there." Lew had the words out before Jock had finished. "Somebody sneaked him out last night. Doc told me when he come over after the detective."

Trouble? Steel is bad enough; steel in bad times is worse; steel in bad times with men to help it act up—

"I ain't fell down on the Old Man yet," growled Lew, "an' by the scale-drippin' ingots from the soakin' pits o' ——, I ain't startin' now!" His great fist crashed down on the top of his desk. He added in a softer voice: "Called up his house last night but he ain't talkin' business yet. He'll be gettin' better, 'cause his kid's home. I talked to him."

A grunt from Jock.

"But he ain't on the job," said he.

The Old Man's son had been a great

disappointment to Jock. Years ago, when "Shorty," as they called him, had swaggered into Jock's office with all the cockiness of a seventeen-year-old and demanded to be given a whirl at the open hearth, Jock had chuckled and let him have it. But the lad had not had much luck. Too small. Just the same, thought Jock, he's got his father's stuff in him, and he was pleased. But—Shorty had never been back since. Not that Jock took exception to his joining the first Americans to go overseas in 1914; that was to be expected from a son of the Old Man. But when he came back, with a pocketful of medals and no wounds to speak of, he should have stayed with his father. Instead, he had gone tearing off to Africa—for excitement! As if he couldn't get enough of that right here on the square-mile reservation of Midwest Steel! What if he was home, he'd probably stick around till his father got well, cash a check—on the Old Man's funds—and beat it off somewhere else. Now, if there had been any steel in his blood—

"His bein' home ain't goin' to scare no crooks off this place," added Jock contemptuously. "What did ye put them chippers in the bunkhouse for?"

"'Cause I wanted to keep an eye on 'em—an' use 'em as cover fer them detectives," said Lew with heat. "How can I stop 'em without somebody I can trust to—"

THE rattle of the door-knob halted his speech, and they turned to see who intruded. A short, slender figure stood there looking from one to the other from beneath the low-pulled brim of a dilapidated cap. An ill-fitting suit hung on him; it was covered with rust marks and his shoes were dusty. Lew, recognizing him as the new messenger boy so kindly provided by the Employment office, tossed him an order with a gruffness colored by his dislike of this appurtenance of weaklings.

"Take a message to the open hearth fer Jock," he said.

The boy listened to Jock's order and repeated it after him.

"Red Sullivan, Number 2 furnace, another heat of forging steel, rush. Yes, sir." Then he turned to Lew and delivered a message. "An accident on the chipping floor," said he. "A chisel flew out of its hammer and hit a man on the head. He's gone to the hospital."

Lew and Jock exchanged glances. Both of them knew that no chisel could fly from an air-hammer unless it was so intended; chisels are locked in their barrels to prevent just such occurrences. This was the third calamity of the morning.

"He whispered to me," added the boy, "that he is the other detective."

"Well I'll be—" Lew began in a voice hoarse with anger, but stopped to jump and set his back against the door. For Jock was less concerned with the news than with the bearer of it. He was stooping to look more closely beneath the broken cap brim. And reaching out slowly with a mighty paw to drag it from his head.

"Well, I'll be everlastin'ly charred!" he growled.

"Got one of 'em?" from an excited Lew. "Hold him!"

"Naw," said Jock disgustedly, "it's Shorty Kemp. What you doin' here?"

Not a very pleasant welcome to a wandering son, this frown. It brought a twisted smile to the lips of Midwest Steel's son. And Lew—he decided to stick with his back against the door.

"Trying to find out what makes chisels fly around loose," said Shorty with a grin. "Got home yesterday," he continued after a suspicious silence, "and heard about some trouble, so here I am to take a whirl at it."

A snort from Jock.

"Strikes me ye're about three years late."

"Right you are, Jock. It took dad's breakdown and a cable to tell me that." A shadow appeared in his brown eyes, but they did not waver under the scrutiny of the gray ones of Jock's, eyes that had a way of uncovering the weaknesses—and the strengths—of any would-be steel man.

"Another whirl, eh? Like the one on the open hearth?"

"Same kind of a start, Jock. The finish—" he left it unsaid. It was sober enough, too. "Maybe I can't swing a shovel, but I can help dad—and you—pull out of this mess."

"Nobody asked ya to," rumbled Lew. He had never seen Old Man Kemp's son before, but he was taking his cue from Jock—and keeping his back against the door. "I don't need no messenger boy."

"But you took me on when I reported this morning, didn't you?" Shorty's quick retort had a snap to it that was reminiscent of his father. "That makes me a hand, doesn't it? I can't help my size—" he turned to Jock—"how old is the 'messenger boy'?"

" 'Bout twenty-five, I guess."

"Thanks!" Good old Jock! Behind that apparent unfriendliness of his lay a memory—and a warm spot for the undersize son of Steel, even if he was three years late. "That makes me old enough to have some sense, I believe. I grew up on the way home. The Africa business is done; it's steel from now on. Though I could tell you a story about a bull elephant—" his eyes lighted up for a moment, then sobered—"which has nothing to do with crooks in the plant. Did you ever see an oiler confabbing with a chipper? What business has an oiler got on the chipping floor, anyhow?"

"Pete? Why, that horse-faced sliver of sin," flared Lew. "I'll fire him so quick—why, I fired an oiler just the other day fer loafin', an' told him—" his words died in his mouth.

"And put this Pete in his place!" concluded Shorty. "Just how much do you know about him?"

It was not necessary for Lew to reply; his sagging jaw bespoke the thought that had come to stop his tirade, leaving Shorty to express it.

"There you are," said Shorty calmly. "He's a new man—talking to a chipper."

"I'll go get 'em," snarled Lew. "I'll fire 'em so quick they'll—"

"And let some one else put the mill on the blink," interrupted Shorty. "No, I know where that chipper works. Marked his bench. The thing to do is to trail that oiler and see what he's up to. Which I planned to do on my own—till Jock spoiled it," he added with a grin at the big man.

Lew surrendered reluctantly to that, but with a reservation.

"I'll do the trailin' then," said he.

"And let the whole mill know he's being watched? Who'll keep the ingots coming through? There's one advantage in being a runt—" with a flicker of his eyes at Jock—"they'll never notice me till it's too late."

"Not a bad idea, Lew." Jock gave his decision with what started to be a chuckle of satisfaction, but ended as a judicial cough. Maybe this boy-man had some guts—"Strikes me ye know a lot more'n yer tellin'," he added.

"It's no time for telling." Shorty's eyes were dancing and he moved toward the door. "It's time to catch an oiler. Talk later."

And Lew—stood aside and opened the door.

"He'll do!" was Jock's opinion when they were alone again. "He talked jest like his old man," with huge satisfaction.

"Maybe," said Lew. "He ain't a crook, bein' a Kemp, but—them blooms ain't chipped yet," he added gloomily.

"Out o' the way, ye crape-hanger!" Jock actually chuckled this time. "Ye don't know when yer lucky! An me, I'm goin' over an' melt a heat o' steel myself! An' it won't have a seam on it!" He turned in the door, however, and added: "If ye need any more help, jest holler." Then he was gone.

And Lew, left to himself, removed a dirt-littered hat and further polished his hairless dome with a thoughtful hand.

"That oiler does climb around the bloomer," he muttered. "Maybe it was him that jimmed them pointers."

Whereupon he too charged out into the gloomy immensity of his building, leaving the tiny office in its accustomed state of desertion.

THE heart of the great building that eats ingots stands less than half-way back and close to the right wall that towers so high above it. Thirty feet tall, that tremendous clothes-wringer for steel, its two rolls four feet in diameter and ten feet between the housings turning their polished lengths in a silken movement that is accented by the rustle of a spray of water that plays over them. There is nothing silken about its labor, though, when the butt end of the slightly tapering domino of a white-hot ingot is trundled up to it on the long roll table that leads through it to the rear of the building. Then it is a battering, crushing force, taking its irresistible power from a silent motor that looms up from the floor of a barn-size lean-to beside it and slowly turns the great shaft that connects them.

From soaking pits to chipping floor, a quarter of a mile of noisy machinery—and no men visible. Unless you spy the glass-fronted pilot house erected above the roll table some fifty feet back from the mill. Four men sit in that pulpit; eight hands rest upon levers that control the manipulators, the motor, the roll tables and the adjustment of space between those ingot-mangling rolls—indicated by pointers that rotate about a big dial suspended near its top.

The lengthening snake that crawls back and forth beneath them casts a pink glow up into their expressionless faces, throws black shadows about the high roof as it flops in a death agony of their ordering, but they only brood above their job and pull their levers with the coordination of a machine. "Get out the tonnage" is their motto, even when orders are light, for they must reduce an ingot to a bloom in seventeen passes before that ingot gets too cold.

An oiler? Let Lew worry about the bearings and a man to lubricate them, they had forging steel to bloom, five more heats of it, fifty ingots—sixty, counting that extra heat made necessary by the joke on Fred the screw-down man. If an oiler passed their pulpit with his smoking torch, he was only about his job. If, in the shelter of the massive frame of the mill where they could not observe his peculiar actions, he dropped to the ground and wigwagged with his torch—

That was what Shorty had been waiting for. He had stretched out in the darkness of the lean-to where its wall joined the higher one of the building and watched the oiler with the patience of a big-game stalker. Slowly, as if nothing untoward were in his mind, he had worked his way along the narrow passageway between the black wall and the bench-high roll table, smearing grease and squirting oil on the bearings and gears of the long shaft that turned those rolls. He passed Shorty without seeing him—Shorty had seen to that—and now was positively wigwagging in the direction of the forest of billet piles into which the passageway blended at the rear of the building. There was no man on that path, for it had just been illuminated distinctly by the glow from a passing bloom. But there must be some one back there who saw, for a signal came back at once. *Bong! Bong!* As if a cold billet had been struck with a hammer. Faint in the ringing din of the chipping floor, but unmistakable. The oiler's torch gave one flirt and sank below the surface of the ground. He had dropped down the shaft into the scale pit. And Shorty, with an anticipatory shiver of excitement, sneaked across and followed him.

The scale pit is an inferno of noise and heat and dampness. It receives the steaming water, dirty with the scale that spalls off the squeezed ingots above; it houses, in an unlighted tunnel that reaches forward beneath the roll table, the mechanism of the manipulators; it echoes and reechoes with the din of massive machinery. There are great bell cranks in there, arms and elbows of ponderous proportions that jump into action when the pulpit orders. They rise and prod an ingot over with a crash, they jerk awkwardly to work a movable vise on the roll table above, a pair of jaws that spring out from its sides, clamp the ingot and move it to one side or the other as the manipulator man wishes. Here is a stinking inferno taken for granted by the pulpit crew; here is a place where an oiler must come—but not with a wrench in his hand.

He was squatting on the oil-covered floor beside the great beam of cast iron that rose and prodded, his back toward the shaft from where Shorty peeped. His torch smoked on the floor beside him, he heaved on a nut with his wrench. When the arm rose, he waited for it to return; when it came to rest again he raised his wrench. That was when Shorty hit him in the back with a quick dive.

If the oiler had seemed an indolent, harmless laborer above ground, he was squirming hate now, a veritable eel in his desperate contortions. His grease-covered overalls made gripping difficult; his wrench, now an offensive weapon, made slips disastrous. As Shorty discovered, for in a breath he had squirmed about and delivered a short-armed swing with the heavy head of the eighteen-inch tool. It clipped the side of Shorty's head a nasty crack, and brought stars into the tunnel, in spite of the cap that covered his head.

Then they wrestled, slithering about in the grease and water, rolling from side to side of the narrow space while those great arms gesticulated unfeelingly above them. Once the oiler's body stiffened, shoving Shorty's back against something. It moved—up. It was the prodding beam, rising to flop the bloom. It scraped his back for a moment then it was above him, and the oiler with a quick pressure shoved his body beneath its butt. Unless he could fight out in the fraction of a second that it was up, he would be a pancake!

The oiler was braced against the opposite wall, his eyes popping with the strain, his teeth bared evilly, the square butt of the ram hung above him. Four years of war—and this! Shorty jerked his arms free, hoisted himself above the pressure of the oiler's body, and arched himself, just as that ram descended with a clang. That was over. But the wrench threatened again. He dove for it, but found his coat was caught beneath the beam. He flung up his hand, caught the blow on his forearm, and had time to yank himself free, ripping his coat loose before the wrench was raised again. This time he completed his dive. His shoulder struck the upraised arm and cracked the knuckles of the gripping hand against the wall. The wrench fell. Somehow he managed to slide back a trifle, get a swinging space for his fist, and sock it home. The oiler collapsed.

Panting, wet and grease-covered, Shorty's first thought was that the mill must be stopped and those great arms inspected. Somewhat dizzily he got up from his seat on the unconscious oiler. The stifling air, the infernal racket, the bitterness of the brief struggle with a vindictive man so much larger than he, made him stagger as he stooped back toward the scale pit and its shaft to the ground level—until he thought of the possibility that the oiler might recover and escape before he could return. He went back.

There was no rope, but the oiler's overalls made good enough binding. The jacket went about his arms, tying them to his side, his belt around that and pulled up tight; the legs of his pants, stripped off without respect to his person, made excellent hobbles for his feet. A thoroughly soaked knot hauled tight—and Shorty received a vicious kick in the chest as he finished. No question about the man's hatred. It glittered in his eyes, it flashed in a snake-like dart of his head and a snap of his teeth, it expressed itself in the mouthing of words that could not be distinguished. And it gave Shorty an impulse to grin. Funny how the flexing of those grin muscles brings new strength. If he could have swaggered as he left the helpless captive and climbed to the fresh air above he would have done so.

HE MUST have presented an impressive appearance as he burst up the stairs to the pulpit and yelled a demand that the mill be stopped. He had never felt so dirty, even in the trenches. Soaked through; even his face dripping with the muck on that floor.

"Stop the mill," he yelled into the first available ear. "Manipulator's jimmed!"

Four pair of eyes turned on him—and went back to their job. The ingot now almost a bloom, was coming through the rolls toward them, hissing.

"Wait a minute," said one. "Two more passes."

"Don't use your manipulator!" cried Shorty, and waited.

The forty-foot snake of red-hot steel emerged from the rolls, stopped and went back into them again. A paunchy, fat-faced man in the center gave a nod, and one of the four removed his hands from his levers, staring at Shorty thereafter with eyes of wonder. There was no more crashing of the manipulators, but the bloom went through and returned again. Good men, these. They'd bloom their steel as long as the great rolls turned. Well, why not, now that the danger was over?

The finished bloom bounced away toward the shears at the rear, its fish-tail end bobbing—and not till then did the one who nodded speak.

"Well, what's eatin' ya?" suspiciously.

"He's been fightin', Fred," said another. "Bleedin' like a stuck hog."

Shorty passed a hand over his face and discovered that it was not entirely water that was wetting it. That wrench.

"Fightin' what?" from Fred. He had been fooled once before that morning, and still looked it.

"Your oiler," said Shorty. "He's in the scale pit, tied up. Caught him using a wrench."

Action. Fred reached for a cord, yanked it, and a series of shrill toots stabbed through the building.

"Come on. That's fer Lew. He'll be here in a minute."

It was Fred who led the way to the ground and tumbled first into the scale pit. Remarkably agile for a fat man. And it was Fred who, when they had arrived amid the now motionless arms, gave a disgusted "Huh!" that echoed through the silent tunnel.

The oiler was gone!

But his torch stood on the floor smoking, the wrench lay where it had fallen, and—Shorty pointed at the prodding upright. Fred produced an electric torch, turned its beam where Shorty indicated, and cursed.

"The dirty whelp!" he shrilled, for the nut was almost loose enough to turn off with his fingers. "The roll table would ha' been a wreck if ya hadn't stopped him!" He put the wrench to its proper use, adding over his shoulder: "What's the joke about the oiler?"

A scraping of feet, a string of panted curses, and Lew was there. Then, while he and Fred examined every joint in those great arms, Shorty told them what had happened.

"—and the fellow that knocked a signal back there must have been that chipper I was telling you about," he concluded. "Wish I'd taken your tip, Lew, we'd have had him. I didn't figure on him following the oiler."

"Yeah, makes it nice. The lousy bums'll be down on ya like a thousand o' brick now." Was it accidental that the light from the torch struck him in the eyes just then? Shorty laughed.

"I'm glad I wasn't here when he called, anyhow," he said. "That gives us a chance to pick up the chipper right now."

The torch returned to its work.

"Not till ya get some first aid," growled Lew. "O. K?" to Fred. "Well, let's bloom some steel." He led the way out of the shaft, and at the top of the shaft—"We'll put a guard on this rat-hole from now on," he rumbled. "All ya got to do is keep them rolls turnin'. When'll ya be done?"

Fred looked at his watch.

"Noon now," he said. Noon! The morning gone and all Shorty had to show for it was a cracked head! "If Jock gets that last heat over pretty quick we ought to be done by six."

"Ya got to be," said Lew. "It'll take all night fer them blooms to cool."

"I'll stick," promised Fred. "I'll ride a chisel if ya want me to," which was the most striking demonstration of loyalty Fred could have made. It drew an approving grunt from Lew as they watched him climb to the pulpit, and before Lew and Shorty had rounded the end of the roll table his whistle had shrilled, another white-hot ingot had been lowered to it, and the mill was rumbling away at its job again.

"Ya said sompin about knowin' who's back o' this," said Lew when the office door had been closed behind them and Shorty was baring his head for Lew's attention.

"Don't know much," said he. "Didn't have much time to ask questions and talk don't mean much anyhow." He winced under the rough fingers that worked on him. "Don't mind me, go ahead. They tell me that there's another mill working on an order like ours, see? With the same promise of big tonnage. It looks like they're going to see that we don't make good. Midwest Steel isn't the only outfit that needs business. That's my hunch; all we've got to do is prove it, which is why that oiler must be caught. Next time I get him, he'll stay caught. And he'll talk, too. I know a few ways of doing that."

"Africa?" ventured Lew, and Shorty nodded. Or tried to. At that moment Lew was busy applying adhesive tape—no questions asked about how much hair would come off with it later—and nodding was not easy. "Now beat it out an' get dry," Lew ordered as he surveyed his handiwork. "Get under a soakin' pit for a while."

Shorty replaced his cap.

"Never know I'd been walloped, would you?" He grinned. "Do you happen to trust anybody around here?" he asked before he left.

Lew gave a mirthless laugh.

"Nobody but Fred's gang an' Joe Ball. He's been here ten years. Had a lot o' tough luck at home lately—sickness an' all, but he's been on the job steady ever since this order come in. Ain't so sure about Fox, his assistant. Know him? Looks like a bulldog an' is all the time grinnin'."

"Yes, I knocked him down this morning," with a laugh.

"Huh?"

"I figured him for the boss," explained Shorty. "Wanted to put on a show to demonstrate how ignorant I was as a new messenger boy and get acquainted with him at the same time. Saw a crane swinging a bloom at him and saved his life so hard we both tumbled."

"What'd he do, take a paste at ya?"

"No, he laughed—after we got up and dusted our clothes off. The bloom was too high to hit him and I knew it, but I played scared. And when we got up he told me all about the chipping floor."

"Yeah, he would. Talk an' no work, that's Fox. Joe Ball, now, he's keepin' his eyes peeled. Gettin' ready fer tonight an' them loafin' chippers."

"Loafing? Don't you work 'em nights?" Shorty's surprize showed in his eyes.

Lew shrugged.

"That's the trouble. Can't see the seams by 'lectric light an' them low-browed hunkies'll be runnin' loose tonight."

A low whistle from Shorty. Twenty chippers, inside the yard, with nothing to do after dark—but mischief! His plans changed.

"In that case I'll take a look at the bunkhouse right now," he said, and laid his hand on the door-knob. "That chipper can wait. If we don't catch the oiler this afternoon, he'll show up there tonight, sure."

"Not a bad idea—after ya dry out," said Lew, and the door slammed.

THE bunkhouse was as easy to see—and as hard to approach without being seen—as a fortress in the middle of a desert plain. It was a barrack-like frame structure of one story, standing on posts in the center of a piece of barren ground about an acre in extent that lay behind the mill buildings. There was only one way to get to the place, even at night, without being discovered. Even then there would be some risk.

The scrap pile, a mountainous heap of rusty junk that was fodder for the furnaces, ranged past the ends of two buildings and formed the inside boundary of the cinder-covered area. It might be possible to slip around the end of it, describe a wide circle about the rear end of the bunkhouse until he came to the boundary fence, then crawl across the ground under cover of darkness and take refuge beneath the elevated floor. Its occupants would be loafing about the front door—its only one—and be unaware of his approach. If he were lucky.

This time he advanced directly across the yard without any attempt at concealment. If any one should question him, he could say that he was on an errand for Lew. It gave him a strange sensation, even so. He was so conspicuous. He felt like a lone traveler crossing a desert. No sign of vegetation, and the hot sun beating down upon him. Except for the ringing sound of the chippers in the near-by blooming mill building, there was no indication of human presence. The low-roofed shed with staring vacant windows, all closed, might be an abandoned house— Was that a movement inside that end window? It was so fleeting that he could not be sure. Why should he feel creepy, anyhow? He was dried out, comfortable, and in the mill yard, not in a strange land. More than a thousand men were working in the area about him, yet there was that eerie feeling of aloneness and of being observed. He gave a grunt of derision, flung open the door and entered. What he expected he could not say, but he was ready. The place was vacant.

There were a dozen bunks on each side, more than enough for the twenty men who had come in the night before. Two of those bunks would not be used again tonight. Poor devils! Those detectives that had been laid out. He'd see that they were repaid for their trouble—and the perpetrators of the injuries as well. Two of the rearmost bunks were piled high with stuff. Blankets, cast off because of the warm weather, clothing, odds and ends of litter. The place might have been occupied for a year—was one of those piles moving? The slightest tremor, as of a reed disturbed by a breeze or the surreptitious passing of an animal—of the faint pulsation of a chest that strives to breathe without motion. He walked on to the rear wall, turned back without hastening his steps, and made as if to leave the place, then jumped over suddenly and jerked away the pile of litter. A grease-smeared face, long and narrow, and flashing the whites of surprized eyes stared up at him. It was the oiler.

Of all the places to hide out in the great yard, to have chosen this! The most obvious spot, the first place a searcher would scrutinize, and he had selected it! Not so bright. Shorty grabbed him with an exultant "Got you!" and snatched him into the aisle. The element of surprize was in his favor—until then.

A snarl, a twist that loosed him from Shorty's grip, and the oiler went into action. He had no wrench this time, but his fists were as hard as billets; his reach was inches longer than Shorty's. There were no impeding walls and ruthless arms moving here—unless it were the oiler's. Shorty took two blows in order to close in; one of them on the eye, which blazed with fireworks and promptly went out of business, the other in the pit of his stomach, but his rush carried him on. They crashed against the end wall, fell in a tangle of arms and legs. The oiler was using every weapon, even his teeth. He was an animal. So that Paul did not hesitate, when he found himself momentarily on top, to thump himself down full force on the stomach beneath. There was a *woof!* of expelled breath and the oiler collapsed. Just long enough for Shorty to anchor him down securely with knees and hands pinioning his arms. The oiler's heels beat a tattoo on the floor as he tried to kick up, but he was helpless. He subsided, all but his eyes.

"Who's your boss?"

Shorty snapped the question between panting breaths. He was dripping with sweat, bleeding a bit, too, from a blow on the nose, while the oiler showed no marks of the conflict except for the drops of blood that were falling on his heaving chest. There was anger in his eyes, however, and Shorty hoped that the sharply put question would bring some incriminating retort before he could control his tongue. But the oiler was not to be tricked. His lips drew back derisively, a look of cunning appeared in his eyes.

"Try an' find out," he gasped, a thin voice, " 'fore the blooms is chilled."

What did that mean? Shorty's mind searched for the answer—and strayed momentarily from its concentration on the oiler beneath his hands and knees. Just long enough for the body that had been supine to heave up suddenly and pitch him from balance. He slid sidewise like a man on a shying horse. He might have thrown out his hands to save himself, but the oiler's arms, to which he was frozen with a tight grip, jerked at the same time and he was lost. He fell; his head struck the corner of a bunk; there was a flash of brilliance in his eyes and he was unconscious.

He could not have stayed out very long, for it was still daylight, still suffocatingly hot, when he opened his eyes. He was lying awkwardly with his hands aching beneath him. The oiler was gone. An attempt to sit up disclosed the fact that he was bound. What a fool he had been! After having downed the oiler for the second time, to permit him to escape! All because—what had the oiler said? Chilled blooms. That meant hard blooms. And hard blooms can not be chipped.

While he struggled dazedly for the solution of the remark, he was attempting to free himself. The oiler had taken a tip from him and used some of the available clothing for bonds. He got to a sitting position, thence to his feet by way of his knees, his head throbbing painfully in several places, as he made hard going of it, sweat starting afresh. A glance out of the window in the direction of the towering black bulks of the buildings disclosed two figures approaching—and simultaneously an explanation of the oiler's remark came to him.

Chilled blooms meant suddenly cooled blooms. Water on hot steel turns it hard; hard as glass if the carbon is high enough. They would have to be annealed—at least twenty-four hours lost—before they could be chipped. And there was water available on the chipping floor!

The long expanse of dirt floor where the two rows of chippers worked surrounded by their piles of billets and served by the cranes was under roof—and dry. There was a powder of dust, gritty with chips under their feet. At least twice a day it was sprinkled. A man with a hose could slip over to the corner of the floor where those hot lengths were piled for slow cooling, turn his water on them, and—stop shipment instantly!

IF SHORTY'S efforts to free himself had been dazed before, they were frantic now. Two men approaching the bunkhouse — undoubtedly to make sure that he would stay there—and the oiler gone to set in motion this new destruction! It might be well to study those two men for later identification. They were chippers, for their goggles hung about their necks and they had rust on their shapeless clothes. Their hats were well pulled down over their eyes, they each wore black mustaches, but in that respect they were like every other chipper. And that was all he took time for. The saving of the blooms was much more important. That meant freeing himself before the men arrived. Fortunately they walked with a leisurely assurance. Perhaps to avoid drawing attention.

The cloth that bound his wrists was dry and a trifle loose. He backed up against a bunk, squatted so that the knot caught under its corner, and hoisted. The frame was of rough wood and splinters caught at his wrists, but his hands slipped out a trifle and he hoisted again. One hand slipped out—and the grating of the men's feet on the gravel became audible. He freed his other hand and fumbled with stiff fingers at the knot about his feet. The door-knob rattled just as he kicked it off, and he jumped for a window. A surprized guttural from the swarthy-skinned callers, and he hoisted the window. They rushed and he dove, headfirst, through the window, to alight on his hands and complete a summersault—thanks to almost forgotten gymnasium training—and come to his feet, running.

This was no flight from two men. He would have taken them on gladly if there had not been the blooms to think of. He dashed on, not even looking behind to see if he were pursued, and tore through the door, large enough to receive a freight car, into the resounding space. The men worked over their blooms, the cranes scurried back and forth, there was no sign of the sprinkler. Nor were the hot blooms visible. They were in a far corner, sheltered—from draughts of air! He ran down the center aisle between the chippers, met Joe Ball and Fox running toward him. They shouted something he could not hear in the racket and kept on. The chippers continued to bend stodgily above their hammers.

He dashed around a pile of billets that stood like the trunk of a stripped tree, came out upon the open space where the blooms lay piled like great logs—and saw the sprinkler advancing toward them. Some of the blooms were black with heat waves shimmering from them, others shaded in heat colors all the way to straw color—just from the shears. The stream of water from that hose was too small to chill them thoroughly, but it would make hard spots on them that were just as disastrous.

The man who held the hose was a husky, low-browed brute with arms like a gorilla, but Shorty dove and floored him. They sprawled in the wet dust and the hose fell with them, spluttering harmlessly into the ground. But here was another man paid well for his services. One long arm reached out and wrapped itself around Shorty's head, squeezing it tightly against his sweat-soaked and stinking shirt, the other reached for the hose. He scrambled to his feet as easily as if he hugged a bundle of rags and advanced to the job of wetting down steel.

Shorty kicked and clawed, jerked his mouth free from the smothering shirt and yelled. "Lew!" His kicking feet managed to entangle themselves with the other's and they fell heavily again. Shorty was jarred free, and quickly swung a fist with all his might at the heavy chin. It resulted only in sore knuckles for himself, for the great arm hugged him again. Not before he got out another "Lew!" with all his lungs. He kicked and slugged—and another pair of dirty hands seized and held him. His voice had been heard, at any rate, so—"Lew!" a throat-tearing shriek got free before a horny hand clapped over his mouth.

The stream of water was actually striking the first of the blooms when help arrived. It was Fox, with several men behind him. He downed the sprinkler, another grabbed Shorty's conqueror, and a terriffic mêlée followed. Shorty, freed for action, ran first to shut off the water. When he returned to the fight he could not identify friend or enemy in the tangle of men. Chisels flashed their cruel edges, fists rose and fell; one man brandished a short pinch-bar that was normally used for shifting blooms. And the deep *pong-g-g-gl* of the chipping hammers went on.

Before Shorty could locate Fox and go to his help the fight was over. Fox lifted himself from the mass, wiped a bloody face that grinned, and Lew came running up with Joe Ball behind him. Six men were winnowed out of the fighters and taken away with Fox in charge of them, and the steel was safe again.

"Fer two minutes, anyway," grated Lew.

They were a badly used lot, with faces and scalps cut. One of them nursed a broken arm judging by the way he nursed it. The friends were not uninjured, either; several of them requiring hospital attention.

"An' that's all we can do to 'em," growled Lew. "Pinch 'em, sure—an' give 'em a nice home in a comfortable jail! I'd like to hang 'em on a soakin' pit crane an' dip 'em in a furnace a couple o' times, the dod-blasted, back-bitin' sons of crook-raisin' lizzards! How'd ya get wise to 'em?"

Once more Shorty had to confess defeat at the hands of the oiler. Spitting grit from his mouth, wiping mud from his clothes, he told of his experience. His one good eye brightened, however, as he concluded. "We never would have stopped them if I hadn't been whipped, though." It was quite sufficient compensation for the injuries he had sustained to pride and body. "I saw Joe Ball and Fox running the other way when I came in. What for?"

Lew snorted.

"Pretty slick! Somebody slipped a cold billet on the roll-table back of a bloom. It went into the shears an' busted 'em. Shearman yells fer Joe, they both come a-runnin'—an' the sprinkler gets busy. I was just puttin' a guard around them blooms, too!"

"Shears out for good?"

"Naw, busted a blade. Fix it in half an hour. But who's bossin' this? How're we goin' to stop it when that guy's runnin' loose? An' the chippers cut in two now!"

"I can get more chippers." It was Joe Ball who volunteered—an exceedingly worried-looking Joe Ball, whose eyes had been following the departing fighters. Now they looked at Lew—fleetingly. "I could ha' picked up fifty men yesterday."

"Get 'em," ordered Lew. "Get thirty. Right away. We'll chip them blooms if we have to put three men on each one. An' we'll put a guard around this place tonight so thick a cat can't get through—an' chain them chippers to their bunks, too!"

"I've got a better—" Shorty began, then stopped. Was that a listening look in Joe Ball's eyes? Was there something of an overanxiety to hear what was said? Lew might trust Joe Ball, but he sagged, mouth, head, cheeks and shoulders. He might suspect Fox, but Fox grinned. "I better slip over to the hospital myself," Shorty substituted. "See you later—at the office."

If he saw a surprized question in Lew's eyes as he turned away, he let it go at that. He only had a hunch, but—hunches had worked fairly well so far.

WHEN later he opened the door into Lew's office, he found Jock there too. It was good to see the big man again, especially to receive his hearty grip—it was the first one Jock had offered. What difference did it make if it hurt sore knuckles?

"Tell me ya been doin' a little fightin', rumbled Jock. "An' judgin' by yer looks it ain't been easy pickin'."

"You mean I've been taking a few beatings," said Shorty, and slid up on the desk. He was tired. Even though his bruises had just been dressed they were throbbing painfully.

Jock chuckled.

"But ye're so close to the ground they can't keep ye down," he bragged.

"Ain't quite as big as his old man," said Lew quite casually, "but he takes as much o' whippin'."

"Which reminds me," said Shorty after an embarrassed pause. "I haven't thought about him all day."

He turned and reached for the telephone behind him—and Jock winked slowly at Lew. That was a lie, but it was a good one.

"Hello, how's father? What?" Shorty's battered face lighted up and he announced the cause of it. "He's up!" It might have been the voice of a small boy saying: "Candy!" The light in his one good eye was quite strong enough for the other one as well. Then he bent his head eagerly to the phone.

"Hello, Dad!"

Jock and Lew avoided one another's eyes, and longed for the strong words of men who get out tonnage. Then a curt—

"Who told you you could get up? . . . Then go back to bed! Your job is to get well. . . . Oh, just sitting here in Lew's office chinning with him and Jock. They say hello. (Dad says howdy.) . . . Yes, learning the steel business. Going to ask you for a job—if you need a helper." Followed a laugh that might have been a trifle more steady than it was. "Sure, everything's going fine. . . . Eastern Forge? Did the doctor say you could talk business? . . . Then I won't tell you! I'll see if there's an order and tell you later," he added very casually. "No, I won't be home for dinner. Jock's tapping a special heat and I want to watch it. Now you get to bed!" roughly. "How the Sam Hill am I going to learn the steel business if I have to watch you every minute? . . . That's a good boy. Good night, Dad." And he hung up the receiver—gently.

It was Jock whose heavy voice broke the silence. He coughed.

"I was tellin' ye, Lew," he said in an extra loud voice. "I was tellin' ye not to stick them chippers in the bunkhouse! They'll be playin' hob with ye tonight. Why don't ye run 'em out?"

Shrewd old Jock, to bellow something that he knew would start an argument—and give Shorty a chance to warm up to it. He got a look for that.

"Because they can be watched in the bunkhouse," said Shorty curtly.

"We'll put a guard around the place an' keep 'em in, too," added Lew. "Like I was sayin' when ye went to the hospittle," with a recurrence of the questioning look that Shorty had ignored.

"That isn't the kind of watching I mean," said Shorty. This was no time, either, to mention his suspicion of Joe Ball. He had no proof, and he was not willing to risk shattering Lew's confidence. "Guard the blooms all you want to, but I want to slip back to the bunkhouse after dark. If those new chippers have any more crooks among them—and why shouldn't there be? they'll get their instruction tonight, see? I'm going to be where I can listen in."

"That ain't goin' to keep us from guardin' 'em," said Lew. "I'll stick around the neighborhood myself."

"No," said Shorty flatly. "Let 'em think they're not watched. I'll do it alone. And I'll have information for you before morning."

And that was the end of the argument, for Shorty refused to be moved. The messenger boy gave orders to the two biggest men in the mill—and they, with a twinkle of pleasure between them, gave in.

IT WAS a perfect night for sleuthing. Dark as the inside of a derby hat, except for the string of lights that hung along the roadway past the scrap pile. These Shorty avoided by slipping down along the open hearth building from its front end, ducking around the end of the pile and taking cover in the pitch darkness of the side that faced the bunkhouse. It was impossible to be certain that there were no followers; the best thing to do was to lose himself in the darkness.

There were no other lights in this portion of the yard except those in the bunkhouse. His silhouette could not be seen from there, for there was no light behind him, but some one might see him against the bunkhouse lights, so he followed Indian tactics. He crawled on his belly, circling around the rear of the house to the fence, thence back to its rear from the side that would not be thought of as producing spies, and so beneath the slightly elevated floor. There his progress was delayed for what might prove to be a long wait.

It was logical to assume that many of those men whose feet scraped on the thin floor above and whose voices chattered in a guttural tongue were entirely innocent of any criminal intent. It followed then that —if the conspirators met there—they would not discuss things until the others had gone to bed. The most likely place for such a conference would be outside, near the front door. To this end he wormed his way carefully toward the front end of the barracks, stopping now and then to listen for a possible tip in the conversation above him. No luck there; they used a foreign language. But there was one language he could understand—snores. And as he moved unhurriedly along, the number of snorers increased rapidly. Men don't sit up long after a day's session with chipping hammers; they are worn out. So, by the time he had settled himself comfortably beneath the door-sill, there was very little evidence of wakefulness in the bunkhouse.

To one who waits with no opportunity to amuse himself, time drags very slowly. Shorty had no idea how long he lay there; he only knew that it was growing steadily more difficult to stay awake after his long day of more or less difficulty. It was entirely too comfortable, this lying on the cool ground that had been sheltered from the sun. But the sound of feet approaching across the cinders relieved him of that struggle; low voices buzzed unintelligibly. It was so dark that he could see nothing, nor could he tell by the sounds how many were in the party.

"—watchmen all around the place," was the first he heard. "Can't do nothing there tonight."

He could not recognize the voice except to surmise that it was not a foreign one. Thank goodness for that!

"That's all right," assured another voice with great confidence. "It's all fixed. We'll put the whole floor on the blink tomorrow." There was the ring of authority in this one. It was icy, too.

"How? They got every one but us three," said a third. It was thin, and Shorty had heard it only once, but—it was the oiler. "Can't do much when we're all that's left."

They had come to a stop a few feet from the house and lowered their voices even more, but Shorty could make out what they said. There were no other noises to disturb.

"We can't eh? I'd like to know who's been doin' it all so far if it hasn't been us."

"Who's been tryin', ya mean," said that oiler. "We'd ha' had 'em stopped before this if it hadn't been fer Shorty Kemp."

They knew his name! How? Not that

it made any great difference; it only indicated that, beyond knowing he was on the side of Midwest Steel, they had been told by one of two men—unless Lew had passed the tip along to Joe Ball, whom he trusted.

"Well, how are ya goin' to do anything else?" asked the first voice. It sounded doubtful and discouraged, which was a satisfaction of a sort. Vaguely familiar too, though he could not place it. Could it be Fox?

"What's the matter, want to quit?" the second voice was saying with heavy sarcasm. "Fat chance! I'll tell ya how we're goin' to do it—for a day at least, an' that'll fix 'em right. We got that contract sewed up in a bag."

So, it was another mill after all. That would be the next job for the two Kemps. Shorty and his father would put them out of business—legitimately, but thoroughly.

"Listen!" The first voice again. That ought to be Joe Ball.

So Joe was in it, after all. It was pleasant to have one's hunches confirmed. And it was undoubtedly Joe Ball that had passed along his name.

"What is it you're going to do?" asked the first voice as the footsteps drew closer.

"Blow up the air compressor," snapped number two, and the interrogator gave a soft "a-haa!" of comprehension. "That'll stop their air supply for a day anyhow. An' there's the little stunt of cuttin' the air hose or puttin' sand in the compressor tank if we can't do that."

"An' what'll Fox be doin' all this time?"

Shorty grinned to himself. He had another confirmation of his judgment. A man that grinned—was generally all right. The sound of nervous steps grew louder, halted beside them just as the question about Fox was answered.

"Fox's due to get beat up in the mornin'," the leader-voice said calmly.

"That ain't necessary." It was the troubled statement of Joe Ball. "I can keep him out o' the way—what's the use o' beatin' him up?"

"You'll keep out o' this," snapped the leader. "Ya're in it up to the neck now—an' so's Shorty," he added with a metallic laugh. "Ya can come out now, Shorty. We ain't got nothin' else to tell ya."

Silence. Shorty slowly froze to the cool ground on which he lay. Were they bluffing?

"Come on out!" sharply. "Or d'ya want us to come under there after ya?"

THERE was nothing to do but crawl out. Of course Joe Ball had told them about this, thanks to Lew's misplaced confidence. He should have been warned. And there was little chance for help if Shorty should yell, for there was no assistance close by and these men could escape before help arrived. With hands and feet—and heart—of ice, he scrambled out, into the grasp of waiting hands, and stood up.

There was the sag-shouldered bulk of Joe Ball. One of the two who gripped Shorty's arms was the slim, long-headed figure of the oiler. The other two men were not identifiable. They had the squat appearance of chippers, but did not talk like them. Of these two, the one that held his other arm was the leader, as his voice indicated.

"We'll put ya away fer a while," said he, as calmly as if he were speaking to an old suit of clothes.

"How much do you want to call this off?" Talk; say anything; get some time to think.

A thin-voiced jeer from the oiler. "Yella!" A jerk on the arm the oiler held. A "Cut it out!" from the leader. All of them happened at the same moment. Shorty jerked his head to face the oiler, saw an upraised hand with something in it. A bar. He tried to defend himself against its menace, but his arms were pinioned; he moved to duck, but the bar came down. *Smack!* it echoed through his head, the struggling shadows around him reeled, and he knew no more.

A terrible stabbing pain in his head, as if it were split wide open; a confusion of voices that made it worse—that was Shorty's first comprehension. It was dark. He was lying on the ground. He tried to lift his head, but such a sickening dizziness swept him that he gave it up. It was a nightmare. He'd go back to sleep again and wake up in the morning at home.

"Can't get away with it," said a very earnest voice. "Lew an' Jock'll never stop till they find him." It was Joe Ball—and Shorty knew then where he was. It was no time for sleep, certainly.

"Well, they'll never find him!" snapped the cold voice of the leader. "You confounded fool! I told ya to lay off him! Now he's dead!"

"I didn't mean to!" The oiler, whimpering. "I only—"

"Shut up! We'll stick him in a chargin' box."

A muttered protest, a heightened whimper, stopped by a smack.

"Fat chance any of us ha' got if they find a corpse!" continued that dominating voice. "That means you too, Joe! If we stick him in an open hearth furnace nobody can blame it on any one."

A long silence, broken only by the faint snivelling of the oiler. Shorty's blood froze. He might as well have been dead, for he was incapable of moving. Panic rode him, terror transfixed him. Burnt to ashes in an open hearth furnace!

"It'll be midnight pretty quick," said the leader. "The scrap gang'll be goin' to supper. We'll stick him in a chargin' box an' cover him with scrap. The chargin' machine'll do the rest. Then nobody'll be convicted o' murder. Get that? Murder!" A louder whimper from the oiler, silenced by a slap.

Pain-ridden as he was, Shorty realized to the fullest extent what lay ahead. He had seen those coffin-shaped charging boxes thrust into the incandescent maw of an open hearth furnace too many times. They always came out empty! As a kid, when he had loafed about the charging floor, he had thought it a marvelous sight. That huge machine that helped the open hearth crews worked unfeelingly—and unseeing. He must escape!

It was a terrific effort to turn his head the fraction of an inch necessary to look toward the voices. The four men were squatting in a group beside him. His slightest move would bring them down on him. Well, why not? It would show them that he wasn't dead; probably be welcome news. He would move and—yell! Yell as loud as he could. He opened his mouth, drew in a slow breath—and a terrible pain exploded in his head, his stomach whirled, and he fainted.

Once more he staggered back into an agony of consciousness. He was moving. He was on a sleeper, headed toward his sick father. But his face was being scratched, there was a heavy weight on him, crushing painfully. His feet were twisted and aching, his back was being stabbed by rough projections. And his head throbbed, throbbed! He couldn't be on a sleeper, though there was the *choo-choo!* of an engine, as well as the bumping over frogs. Terrible jolting that made those projections jab into him. Where was he?

His jagged couch tipped sidewise and the engine labored. It was mounting a grade. He forced his eyes open, but could see nothing, though dirt fell into them. The train rolled on to a level, he caught a flash of light—and memory flooded him. He was in a charging box, on the open hearth floor! The light was from the open doors of a furnace. It swept through the chinks in the pile of scrap on top of him like a searchlight through a brush pile. Its heat puffed on him like the breath of a dragon. The train stopped with a rough jolt, sending a tide of pain surging through him.

Then came the clatter of the charging machine as it picked up the first box. It was working on the train on which he was a passenger! He tried to lift himself, summoned all his strength to force aside the weight of scrap that bore down on him. An agony of pain shrieked in his head, and he felt himself slipping away into unconsciousness again. Never! If he fainted once more he would never wake up! Fight!

There was only one way to save himself. A yell would not be heard above the clangor of the laboring charging machine. The furnace crew, just finished the bone-wearying job of making bottom, would be resting on the opposite side of the floor. Indifferently grateful to the machine for taking a gigantic labor off their hands. The operator of the great beast that plunged full boxes into the two thousand degrees of heat and withdrew empty ones was too far away to inspect their contents, even if he cared. It was just stuff to be melted down into new steel, that was all. Only way to get help was to sit up. Lift your head out of the comforter of scrap. Get it out!

Another effort, desperate, agonizing, with pain screaming in his ears—and only the slightest intimation of yielding by the weight that held him down. Hurry! The clatter and bang of that laboring machine was hurrying too. It never delayed. Steel must be charged before that furnace loses heat. It was a race with relentless production.

Where was his strength? For all his shortness of stature he had always been strong. Another heave, a trifle more of yielding. His feet were pinned fast—a heavy billet on them. His throbbing head could be moved a little. And his hips! By arching himself with all his strength he could achieve the tiniest little lift.

Bang! Clatter! Bang! The noise of the machine was growing louder—its job brought it closer! Another heave, and he could move his hands from beneath the weight that pinned them down. If they had tied him— But they had thought him dead, or they would not have put him there. Useless to tie a dead man. Another heave. How his head throbbed! His whole body screamed with pain. Inch by inch he drew up his arms. A surge of cloudiness, soft and seductive beckoned him to sleep. He fought it off. Closer and closer drew the noise of the laboring machine. And slowly, oh, so slowly, he was getting a leverage for the final heave. If he could only beat the tireless machine!

Now he was set. Summoning his strength for an effort that he knew would be his last, he hoisted. His eyes started from his head. Pain, pain! The brush-heap of scrap iron moved. Just a little, then a little more, then—he was free. Staring blindly into the incandescence of the waiting furnace. He flung his hands high into the air, tried to yell. There was no sound, but he knew that the operator of the machine sitting far back on its opposite side, would see the upflung arms. The clattering of machinery in motion stopped—and Shorty fainted again.

"DON'T! Oh, don't!" Some one was screaming. Shorty opened his eyes impatiently, and the screaming stopped. But it echoed in his head. Terribly. He must be alive. No one could be dead and hurt as much as he did. Some one was holding him. There was a whitecoat bending over him. Hands were fooling at his head. He tried to raise his hands—and that shriek came again.

"There lad. 'Sall right. Jock's got you, boy." A great voice that buzzed soothingly. Cursing, softly. Good old Jock. Jock? Steel? Blooms! He sat upright.

"Joe Ball! Two chippers! Oiler! Joe Ball!" Darkness again.

"Sure we shipped them blooms! An' we got ten furnaces goin' again!"

Shorty was lying propped up by pillows—in the room he had used as a boy. A nurse sat watchfully at one side of his bed, Jock Campbell sat on his side, Lew Reed leaned his elbows on the foot. Shorty's head felt like a balloon, light and floaty, but there was a heavy swath of bandages that held it down on his shoulders. Jock's big voice was coming through its folds faintly.

"Ye can't talk, lad. It's against orders. But if ye listen close I'll tell ye 'fore she gets mad."

Shorty blinked his eyes. He didn't care so much about talking anyhow.

"We found Joe Ball under the bunkhouse. Tied up like a bundle o' carpet. They had to knock him out 'fore they could load you in a chargin' box. He confessed. Was in debt over his head an' they got to him. But he couldn't see stickin' ye in a chargin' box. Yer old man took him to Eastern Forge an' he told 'em all about it. We got the business. We'd ha' got it anyway, our steel was so much better!" Here Shorty managed a twinkle at Lew.

"Yer old man'll be back with the orders 'safternoon. He wired us the go-ahead yesterday. Ought to be here now. Fox's boss chipper now. We got the oiler and the other fellas. They'll be doin' time—when they get out o' the hospital."

Shorty heaved a long sigh, and raised a hand to his head questioningly.

"Concussion," said Jock. "Ye been out two weeks. Almost kicked in—but ye didn't! Too much Kemp in ye!"

"Yer old man got well the very next day!" It was Lew who spoke this time. "Got up out o' bed an' been runnin' the works ever since, ya bet yer life! Ya can't down a Kemp, says I!" Then he coughed embarrassedly, looked around the room, and added: "An' if ya happen to want the City Hall, or a couple o' nice mill buildings, or anything like that, just give us a tip down at the mill!"

A slow grin from Shorty—and the door burst open. The Old Man—in title only, if his appearance was any criterion, stared unseeingly past his two henchmen in steel and into the eyes of his son—both of which were in working order, though at the moment rather uncomfortably warm. And Shorty, who up to this time had been a very indifferent talker, felt the surge of expression rising within him. He held out a hand toward the glad eyes of his father and spoke to the man whose illness had brought him home. He said—

"Hello, Dad!"

THE LAST EVADER

by H. Bedford Jones

Author of "Rodomont," "The White-Tailed Dragon,"

MACARTNY and Willis, the rat-faced little steward, stood on the bridge together as the pilot brought her in, the red-bordered pilot flag still aloft.

"I thought, sir," ventured Willis, "they didn't send no more convicts here to Noumea?"

"Those sentenced for eight years or more," said Macartny, "had to remain for life after transportation was abolished. Constant's father was one of them. He found gold, washed out a lot of it, and sent it out via Chinese traders. They got on to it and the game's up. Now, if we can get him away—all right."

"He'll pay well, sir?" said Willis, who was privileged.

Macartny shrugged his shoulders.

"One doesn't pay well for liberty."

After an absence of two weeks, the *Dryad* thus dropped anchor for the second time in Noumea harbor. Since her previous visit Constant, the radio operator, had been stopping ashore to get in touch with his father—a convict. The officials had not welcomed the *Dryad* any too profusely; her reputation had preceded her.

Macartny was long, lean, eagle-beaked. Willis, the steward, was called "the skipper's dog" by the others—a motley crew, these. There was a new mate, a hard-lipped Australian, whom Willis did not like a little bit. Willis was thinking of him now, as he gazed out.

To one side was the little rocky length of Ile Nou, for so many years echoing to the groans of men past hope. Before the craft, half trader, half yacht, lay outspread the town of Noumea. Here, during fifty years, five thousand convicts had labored to construct less than twenty miles of railroad and one hundred and thirty miles of road. The town conveyed a mournful, cheerless appearance, as if blasted by the hearts' curses of those who had come hither condemned to death in life. Fifty years of cursing can have results.

"Boat coming out, sir," said Willis.

She snaked out rapidly, and in her stern appeared the figure of Constant. He was soon aboard—a thin, swarthy man, fairly young, from the south of France. He spoke fluent English and his intelligence bordered on craft. He saluted Macartny briskly.

"Come along," said the skipper to Willis. "May need your head."

All three went into the chart-room, shut the doors, and settled down with cigarets. Constant showed white teeth in a smile.

"It is arranged," he said. "But there is a new difficulty."

"There always is," said Macartny negligently. "That's taken for granted. They don't know you're his son?"

"How should they? No. And some one is always ready to help, at a price. There has been talk, though, and somebody is suspicious. The day is past when *forcats* are helped to escape, because no more *forcats* are sent here, but these officials—"

"The new difficulty?" cut in Macartny.

"He refuses to tell where the gold comes from, and they have taken him to the East Camp on Ile Nou, yonder, the old place of torture. Thus, he has become an important prisoner, a person of keen concern, the subject of official reports without end. A man who knows where to find gold in quantities is of tremendous importance to New Caledonia."

Macartny nodded.

"This pleasant 'La Nouvelle' of yours has set us a fine nut to crack; well, the harder the nut, the shorter the stroke! Have you made a plan?"

"Yes. If you hang a shirt in the starboard rigging, it is understood you assent."

"I assent." Macartny gestured curtly. "Speak."

"Well, my father is at the East Camp of that island yonder. One of the guards will free him and then come away with us, at a price. Under the hill below the East Camp is a small jetty. When the tide turns tonight, the two of them will be there and will swim off. I said we'd send a boat —if you assent."

Macartny laughed his short, eager laugh.

"Right! What about warships? When your father disappears and takes a gold mine with him, there will be upheavals."

"A light cruiser and two old gunboats are stationed here. Just now, they are out on patrol and map duty."

"Good. Get up to your radio and listen. Try to get their approximate location; remember, we can't afford mistakes! And hang out that shirt yourself, now. Willis, let's have the charts."

Willis brought them and settled down across the table; he was the one man aboard whom Macartny could trust beyond cavil. Not that Willis was good for much, but he was faithful.

The *Dryad* was anchored in the large road, off Point Duiambo; her bows pointed to the town. To one side were swinging glimpses of the shaggy, dark heights of the island, savage and little penetrated—this immense island, the side of four French departments, able to sustain half a million white men and holding only eight thousand. To the other side lay the fish-shaped and terrible outline of Ile Nou, lying opposite Noumea and protecting the harbor; one long prison-camp saturated with blood and tears of men these fifty years.

"France has abolished transportation here but she has not abolished memory," murmured Macartny as he unrolled and weighted down the large scale chart of the harbor. "We're up against it, if we're to stick to the plan of our impetuous Constant. Fast cruiser and two tinpots, eh? If we slip out tonight, they'd be after us—yet why not? We can do nothing else if we're to get away with this gold mine in trousers. Hm! Ebb comes at nine tonight. They'd never dream we would dare slide past the town and batteries—"

He opened the other chart showing the entire island and approaches. Willis at once divined the almost insurmountable difficulty, with three patrol boats somewhere near, of getting away this same night.

Noumea lay nearly at the southern tip of the island. All about, outside, was strewn a bewildering maze of coral, also an outer barrier reef. This reef was pierced by certain channels offering access to open sea—where the *Dryad* could be caught by any craft lying in wait off these channels.

"Here." Macartny put down a finger. "They'd take for granted that we would go out by the Dumbea channel, or else by Bulori. They'll think we've skipped for Australian waters, since that's our only obvious course. Hm! Tide turns at nine, eh? If we got away without an alarm, we could cut around to Porc-épic and then make the Woodin pass, pick up the Ndoua light and so make the Havannah channel—"

Willis could read a chart perfectly, and swallowed hard as he gazed. He perceived Macartny was planning to attempt at night, without a pilot, what the best seaman would do only with utmost care in broad daylight. It was madness to pass among these reefs and islets hedging the south end of New Caledonia, then cut through narrow passages and gain the open Pacific eastward—sheer madness.

"We'll be clear by dawn," said Macartny suddenly, "or else on coral."

"You're going to try it?"

"Why not?" Macartny's rare smile struck at him. "No other way to show these giltbraid bureaucrats that they can't master a man's soul and body. Why not?"

Willis indicated the barometer, which had been going down alarmingly.

"Bottom going out of her, sir. Hurricane by morning."

"By morning, we'll be at sea."

"But it's madness!"

"That's why it'll win. Only madness can win in the face of the impossible."

WILLIS knew when to shut up He was worried by Macartny's wholly unjustified confidence. Every factor was combined against this wild course of action. Despite his supreme faith in the skipper, his love for the man, Willis knew that Macartny relied upon the power of some vague supernatural element to pull him through, and did not like it a bit; he preferred to rely upon Macartny alone.

He liked it still less when Constant came below later, while Macartny was dining alone, to make report.

"Looks well, Captain," said the wireless man cheerfully. "Those two gunboats are up the west coast making soundings; they can't possibly get back off the south passes before tomorrow night, even if summoned. The cruiser, the *Ribot*, is at Ile Uvéa of the Loyalty group, to the north. She is very fast, faster than we are, but by the time she gets back and rounds the south reef, we'll be too far toward Brisbane for her to catch us."

Constant was quite jubilant. He took for granted Macartny would slip through the nearest channel and go tearing for Australian waters, but Macartny intended nothing of the sort. When the wireless man had gone, he flung Willis a sardonic look.

"Short run to Brisbane, eh? Excellent—with a British cruiser waiting to collar us there. In the opposite direction—"

He paused. Willis filled in, with bitterness.

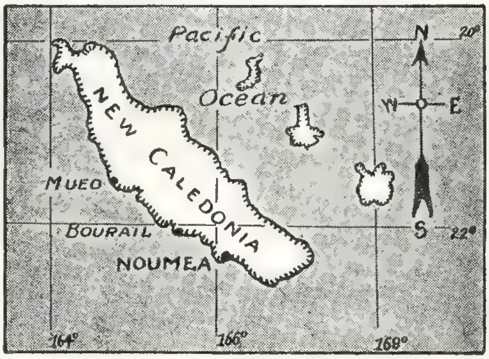
"Don't you see, sir, the French will raise —— about this? They go wild over such a thing! In the opposite direction they'll have both British and French out to nab us from the Solomons, Fijis, New Hebrides and the Ellice group—all around in a circle. Not a port can we make in these seas!"

Macartny chuckled.

"What's faith for if not to use? Tell the cook to get a heavy mess of grub ready; he'll have to douse lights and bank fires when we slide out, and we'll have heavy weather by dawn. Turn in now and get some sleep before ebb tide.

The daylight stole across the horizon and fled up the rolling seas, and night drew down. From the dread torture-isle, whose four peaks climbed the sunset-reddened west, lifted the thin shrilling of bugles. Stars pricked out the velvet of the sky. Along the shores beyond the town jetty, the lights of Noumea began to glitter faintly, spreading past the railroad station and hospital, running back to Fort Constantine on the hill.

The echoes of the sunset gun had long since died into silence along the reefs and mountains. The harbor guides wakened into being; the Ile Nou jetty light, the flaming red sector of the signal station, and the four scarlet eyes farther south, ready to aid ships to and from their precarious moorings. Macartny stood a long while, studying these lights.



The men, meanwhile, muttered in dark corners. They smelled something amiss in this return to Noumea, this picking up Constant, this intent poring over charts and lights. The new mate did not like it, and was fool enough to say so in their hearing. They knew the *Dryad* was no innocent virgin of a ship, of course, yet they balked at some things.

And they were impressed by the portentous aspect of the land and water—the slow oily swell creeping over the harbor, the preternaturally dark hills blotting out the stars, the silent ominous shores lying all around, the little breeze that fetched rustlings of long tropic leaves like the whispered curses of heart-sick men. Now the sun was gone, all beauty was gone from the place; it horrified them, filled them with terrible imaginings. They could vaguely guess what they were here for, and they muttered.

"—knife in his back and another in that dog of his," came a low voice to Willis.

He went his way, ignoring the words, yet with despair rising in him. Every element against them—this time Macartny was pushing his luck to destruction.

Yet Macartny neglected nothing. At eight bells the lights were doused, all of them, and the *Dryad* lay dark; if any one investigated, word of a generator gone wrong. But none bothered. The French seldom bother until it is too late. Nine o'clock came and passed, and by this time the craft had imperceptibly swung about with the change of tide. And now, having studied tidal currents well, Macartny let slip the cable—noiselessly. Not every cable can be slipped thus, without a clink of chain; but the *Dryad* was prepared for such contingencies, even made her living by being so prepared.

She drifted down gradually between town and penal island, a soft blur against the dim starlit waters, engines purring a little. Slowly the drift took her in past Point Lambert, in under the dark mass upon the hill that East Camp men called the penitentiary of hell.

To a superficial eye it was all absurdly easy; the tensed men who watched and listened were bewildered by the smooth ease of it. No ship was moored to the buoys in the fairway. No alarm whatever was sounded. From the town drifted a pulsing tinkle of music; there was no other sound than the rustling murmur of the trees, the gentle slap and laughter of the wavelets overside. Against these things sounded the low voice of the leadsman in the bow, and his report passed on to Macartny on the bridge.

The black mass of the island rose higher and longer; the very proximity of this penal hell of other days was tacit warning. In this desolate expanse of cliff was something indescribably ominous and menacing. From the lifting waters, from the slow and unperceived movement of the ship, from the darkness girdling shores and hills above the town, one gained a sense of looming grandeur and majesty; the craft herself became a stealthy, sneaking thing, abhorrent under the clear stars. The scented breath of flowers from ashore made men turn and stare toward the glimmering town-lights. Willis felt more and more certain of impending doom.

They drew closer in below the island mass. In the water was a movement of phosphorescent light, streaking toward them. A man spoke sharply, flung out a line, and other men went to help. Presently two dripping figures came clambering over the rail—two white-shining, naked men. Constant met them. An inarticulate and gasping voice said something, there was the sound of a kiss, and the three Frenchmen vanished below.

The impossible was accomplished. The last *évadé* in history had left Ile Nou.

Muttering ran along the deck. Another man would have called up his crew, would have told them of an innocent victim of legal injustice, would have appealed to their idealism. Macartny never appealed or explained. His hand touched the telegraph and the engines purred sharply in the silence.

In the wake of the *Dryad*, as she pointed out again for mid-channel, streamed thin fires telling of the churning propellor. These died away and she drifted again, heading down between the tail of Ile Nou on one hand and the batteries on the other. Here was danger, yet it remained hidden. She drew within the sectors of lights and Macartny verified the angles, then turned to the mate beside him, motioning to the two red eyes on Artillery Point.

"In line, sixty-two degrees, half speed, until you turn into the regular steamer course for the Amedée light. When you should haul due south—call me instead. No mistake, now!"

"No, sir," and the mate repeated his directions.

Macartny went forward. Under the impulse of his voice, under the electric spell of his personality, the men went to work. There was plenty to do, making ready against the brewing weather, so grumbling ceased and all hands became cheerful—they had known all the while, said they, the skipper's luck would hold. Always like this, never failed! You take a hard-boiled skipper like him, never opened his yawp to a soul, yet could lay out a man worse with his tongue than with his fist; that's the sort has the guts to pull this sort of stuff and get away with it, every time.

Willis loitered on the outskirts of the work, mournfully saturnine. He alone knew the truth. He alone guessed what trouble would draw down when all hands discovered this truth. And above all, the first officer. Willis knew the mate was inwardly furious at this risking of life and liberty to pull a poor devil out of hell.

After a time Macartny took the bridge again, when the *Dryad* abandoned the usual course for Bulari channel. The stars were clear. He struck due east, precariously sighting his way by the dim rock of Porc-épic, and then working along past the dark mountains for the deep but narrow Woodin channel. This would mean the work half done, the worst past. Presently Willis sought the bridge and found Macartny there alone at the steam steering gear, intent upon the dark waters ahead.

"Too bad we have to crawl," said the skipper. "Glass still falling?"

"Aye, sir. I don't like the way the mate's acting."

"You never did." Macartny laughed. "He doesn't know me very well. Everything stowed?"

"All set, sir. Do you think the game's worth the candle, sir? For you?"

"Would it be, if I were in that poor devil's shoes?"

Willis kept silent. They crept on past dangers manifold, the hill-lights of Ile Nou and Noumea falling away behind. Once the men had found Macartny heading east instead of for the open sea, they had fallen silent again in swift reaction. The slow speed of the craft brought back all their forebodings and fears.

Constant appeared, after a little. He was now aware of the course, but he knew Macartny too well to ask any questions.

"Just picked up the *Ribot*, sir—a message not in code. She's making for the Sarcelle pass, beyond the Havannah and deeper. Should be there before morning. Storm warnings are being sent out. A typhoon bearing down from south and west."

"Is your father all right?"

"Quite, thanks."

"In an hour or so, bring him and that guard up here. Remain waiting, out of sight, behind the chart-house; keep your ears open, in case I need your help. Willis! Bring Constant three pistols from my cabin locker."

ALONE again at the open window of the pilot-house, Macartny lighted a cigaret and conned his course in deep concentration. Once a man forward cried out in terror, warning of breakers to port, but Macartny only smiled; he knew the rock was there.

After this, fear slowly returned upon all the men. Midnight came and went, and the stars hazed over. Across the black hills and black death-strewn waters settled the singular hush of nature that invariably precedes some terrific cataclysm, when all living things flee away to seek shelter, and earth herself awaits in suspense the hurtling of the winds.

When they came into the Woodin pass, Willis came back to the bridge, and could scarce blame the men for their bewildered cursing and stark terror. To the left rose sharp black cliffs, the craggy peaks of the main island. Closing in upon them from the right was the fearful mass of Ile Uen, its needle-pinnacles of rock spearing high up, the channel a bare cable-length in width. Then, with so swift a change that Willis joined a low oath of relief to the chorus of eager voices below, the twin lights of Cape Ndoua came into sight ahead.

"All clear now," said Macartny calmly.

"Except weather," said Willis. "We might ride it out in one of those anchorages beyond Ndoua. If the *Ribot* comes by the Sarcelle channel she'd never know we were there."

"Fetch me some coffee and send the quartermaster here. We'll rig the searchlight."

Willis, rebuffed, slunk about the lower deck, picking up odd words here and there; nothing definite, yet enough to render him uneasy. The searchlight improved matters somewhat, and when they were past Cape Ndoua, Macartny called the mate to the bridge.

"Take her out," he said curtly, and pointed back to the twin lights. "In line, bearing south sixty-seven. Sunrise will see us out. Can't trust full speed yet."

"In line sixty-seven, half speed—aye, sir. Glass going down very fast."

"A French cruiser is coming up very fast. Look alive."

The word was swift to get around. Men rigging the storm curtain caught it and passed it on. Macartny vanished below for a snatch of sleep; he had accomplished something this night, but the doing had told on him heavily.

Willis, bitterly anxious, remained in shadowed places as was his wont. He heard nothing, yet had the sense of dark things impending. Left to themselves, the men might have been all right; conscious of the mate backing them, their fear mounted to savage frenzy. They all knew that by daylight they would be pointing to open sea, hurricane upon them, a fast cruiser racing to cut them off—and all so easily avoided by slipping into one of the sheltered havens close at hand. Why Macartny would not do it, they could not understand. Nor Willis.

Dawn was not far away, a heavy, soggy dawn, when Macartny returned to the bridge. He ordered the searchlight off and under lashings again, and scanned the dark waters. Open sea was ahead, the Havannah channel giving wide to rapid flight. The atmosphere was dead, charged with the oppressive stillness that comes with imminent storm, weighing down the soul.

Constant came into the doorway.

"Just got a long code message from Noumea, sir. Static's bad, but the *Ribot* got it and responded. She's somewhere very close to us. Looks like an alarm—the air's full of stuff."

The radio man departed. The mate, standing by, turned impulsively.

"There's a good anchorage off Goro, sir. Why not lay up there?"

"And have natives send word to Noumea so the whole French fleet can come down on us?" Macartny's voice became acid. "Hm! Afraid of a bit of wind, are you? Got your ticket by having a pull with the Board, I suppose."

The contempt in his words drove deep.

The two men were standing alone in the pilot-house, doors and windows wide open; men were at work outside. Invisible, somewhere in the obscurity, lurked Willis. Everything was indistinct in the dawn-darkness. Ahead, in the channel, showed black and heavy waters, brooding with mystery. Somewhere to the south lay the Sarcelle pass. Here in the little room, where only the binnacle-light glimmered, the air was tensed and weighty. Macartny wiped sweat from his face and then stepped outside. In front of the windows, at the aproned rail, he stood examining the waters through his night-glasses.

"Odd!" he said, as if to himself. "Thought I caught a flicker of light to the south'ard. The *Ribot* must be hanging off, waiting to make the passage by daylight—"

No words could have been better chosen to set the spark into the brains of those who heard. The tremendous barometric pressure of the air, in itself sufficient to set them all on edge, was combined with a terrorized sense of peril, of drifting, imminent danger; and now through the darkness stole blind panic, unreasoning frenzy.

The mate glanced to right and left. He quietly stepped from the pilot-house and came up behind Macartny; two shapes drifted in as if to his aid. All three moved swiftly, silently, giving no warning—yet Macartny whirled about, catlike, facing them.

"You fool!" he said.

The mate dared not hang back, was already leaping. Macartny's fist drove into him midway in the leap; Macartny's hand caught his arm and jerked him forward. A gasp broke from him, then a wild fierce cry as he was lifted and hurled over the rail by his own impetus. The cry became a scream, and this ended in the crash of his fall on the deck below.

"Hands up, you two!" said Macartny. "Cover them, Constant."

"Aye, sir."

The pair of frightened mutineers found three pistols converging on them, three figures at their backs.

"Get to your work," said Macartny. "Go down and carry that mutinous rascal below, if he can't walk, and lock him in his cabin. Willis! You're acting mate. Look alive."

The two men scuttled down the starboard ladder. Some one below called up that the mate was badly hurt. Macartny ignored it and returned to the pilot-house.

And then, a very bolt from the blackness, came a sudden clear radiance enveloping the *Dryad* in light.

There was no warning sweep over the sky, there was no slightest hint to give them time. It must have been sheerest blind chance—the search-light switched on, officers standing by—and the wizard beam leaping out to pick up this craft! Willis, more than any one else, sensed the damnable mischance of it, and a groan broke from him. Everything against the skipper, even the luck. The agony of the moment was intolerable, until Macartny's voice drove through it like a sword.

"All hands! Take cover. Up here, quartermaster. Look alive!"

The craft leaped and quivered, gathered into full speed, sent a curling wave of foam leaping high at her bows. All the sea showed sullen in this white glow of light, heaving in a low, glassy ground-swell; though the grayness of dawn was already in the east, there was no breath of wind. In this instant, the hurricane might have saved Macartny, but it was still a matter of minutes away—and minutes were hours. The *Ribot* was a scant mile distant, off across the reefs to the southwest.

An interminable period of time ensued, a full minute at least—the cruiser was no less astonished than her prey at this unexpected revelation. Macartny stood at the bridge rail, and ordered the doors of the pilot-house closed and lashed. Willis came to him, wincing at the glare of light, and then came Constant, hurriedly, holding out a slip of paper.

"Message, sir—orders to heave-to at once."

"Go below," said Macartny.

The radio man shrugged and obeyed.

"Anything we can do, sir?" asked Willis.

The skipper gave him a calm look.

"We're at full speed—that's all."

Speed meant nothing in that glow of light, bathing them in radiance.

"We can't get away, sir—unless we stall, gain time—"

"It's all right," said Macartny, and smiled a little. "I'll pull through."

Willis wanted to retort that every —— fool thought the same thing until he was hit. The skipper's perfect composure terrified him.

"Everything's against us—everything!" he muttered nervously.

"And I'm on the bridge," said Macartny. "Get down for'ard and hold things; shoot the first man who doesn't obey. I'll have to speak through a trumpet soon. Jump!"

Willis slid down the ladder. As his feet touched the deck a red flash leaped from the eye of the search-light, it seemed. Ahead of them a shell ricochetted and burst in a plume of water; the gun-report vomited thickly in the abnormal air-pressure. Macartny turned to the open pilot-window, spoke to the quartermaster.

"Hold the course, whatever happens! It'll clear the Loyalties, clear Fiji, clear everything! Hold it!"

"Aye, sir."

The ship leaped faster, every ounce of power in her engines driving her slim shape through the sluggish waters as if she were agonized by the menace behind into frantic effort. Another flash from the cruiser. Close overhead screamed the shell, to burst ahead of her—two cable-lengths away.

"Not bad," said Macartny, his voice curiously calm. "They want their goldmine back at all costs, eh? Well—"

He was gazing steadily out to the southwest, whence came the shells and the pencil of light. In the wires overhead was a tense thrumming, a quick, keen, singing note, not wholly produced by the *Dryad's* speed. A cold, stinging gust of wind smote and was gone again. Every man felt it, and tensed—it was like a touch from the finger of hope. Another two minutes, one minute—"

Again the red flash; then chaos.

MACARTNY was flung to the deck. Smashed fair amidships by the shell, the *Dryad* staggered and reeled under the shock. A wild hissing scream rose out of her depths, shrill voices of men and steam-burst mingled; through the steam scrambled naked yelling shapes. All her speed fell away and was gone, and her engines were silent.

She shuddered violently and righted, a hurt and stricken thing. In that steady bathing brilliance, every detail was horribly distinct. Macartny dragged himself into the pilot-house. A terrified man came up the ladder with wild cries.

"All gone to —— below! Shell went clean through—smashed the engines—steam's all through her! Chief's killed, lord knows who else—"

"Get below and order out the fire extinguishers."

Macartny seized his speaking-trumpet, caught the quartermaster by the shoulder, shoved him.

"Below! Rout out that suit of sails from the paint-locker—get them bent, somehow! You! Get the hand steering-gear unlashed aft and put a man at it until I get there. With the wind, the storm apron will give us a breathing spell before it blows out."

He darted from the house, leaped to the bridge rail.

"Willis! Willis! All hands down there—bend on a rag of canvas for'ard! Send report of damage! Jump!"

The general paralysis of despair and terror was pierced by that flaming voice, and Macartny's will drove the men to work. No more shells came. In the clear beam of light the *Dryad* showed helpless and wallowing; the cruiser had only to reach her and seize its prey. She was lost.

Willis, despite the magic of that ringing voice from the bridge, saw how futile was all effort. The game was played out—nothing now but a miracle could save them. He laughed at this thought, bitterly; a miracle, indeed! Not all Macartny's self-confidence could draw down a miracle—

The search-light snapped off, vanished as abruptly as it had come.

Willis got a report from below, started for the bridge, and encountered Macartny descending. The engines were gutted; but there was no damage below the water-line, no danger of fire. The chief and two other men killed outright. As he spoke, Willis realized dawn was at hand, a dim gray light spreading over the sea; he could even discern the distant shape of the cruiser, standing out from the reefs to bear down upon them. Macartny gazed out at her.

"Everything's all right, then," he said calmly. "Lucky I had that canvas fitted for emergency use. Send down and open the oil tanks—quick about it!"

Willis swore. For once he doffed all respect.

"Engines gone to ——, a hole through us, wind coming, no shelter, captured—no, you wouldn't call it an emergency," he declared. "I think you're crazy! Nothing but a miracle—"

Macartny's rare laugh rang out. He caught Willis by the arm and whirled him.

"Heaven helps those who don't give in—there's your miracle. Canvas, now, and the oil out—jump!"

Willis did not understand—none but Macartny quite understood—yet he leaped to obey, his voice shrilling at the men. The darkness to the southwest, where showed the speck of the cruiser, was broken by a curious white line; in the air overhead grew a sonorous *humm-m-m*, rising in swift crescendo to a sustained roar of sound. Suddenly the shape of the cruiser vanished, and the white line came racing down the sea.

"Hang on all!" yelled Willis.

The white line struck—foam, spindrift, wind pressing it on. Over leaped the wounded *Dryad*, far over, held there. As she hung, Willis had one glimpse of the cruiser flying out beyond and past them on the white wave. In the stupendous roar of the heavens everything else was lost, all sound drowned out and smothered.

The great wave of spindrift passed and was gone. The wind remained, pressing the sea flat, roaring like thunder across the gray sky. Little by little the crippled craft came up; suddenly the tumult of wind was gone, dropping all in an instant. There was a space of terrible silence, and the *Dryad* was like a hurt man dragging himself half erect. A cry from the men—another wall of white foam raced down upon her, smote her, smothered her with tons of water.

Willis saw a human shape hurled past him, flung bodily through the air, as he gripped for dear life and went down under the watery mass. This went by; now grew a wilder roar in the heavens, and wind smote upon the yacht's curtained bridge, until the lashed canvas ripped out and soared up the sky. It had served its purpose.

Somehow the sail was got out forward, and somehow it held. Willis started aft, found men crawling from below, and then clawed his way to the stern; the ship was leaping before the wind, caught up and hurled on by the seas, like an arrow from the bow. Willis located the skipper by the hand steering-gear on the after deck, two men lashed at the wheel, and beckoned him into a sheltered spot.

"Chief dead, mate dying with a broken back, four or five men gone. Engines wrecked but no water making. We may be able to find shelter yet."

Macartny wiped the spray from his face and laughed, his eyes agleam.

"Right! Hold our course. We'll make Honolulu."

"Eh?" Willis gaped. The words were incredible. "You mean—it's madness!"

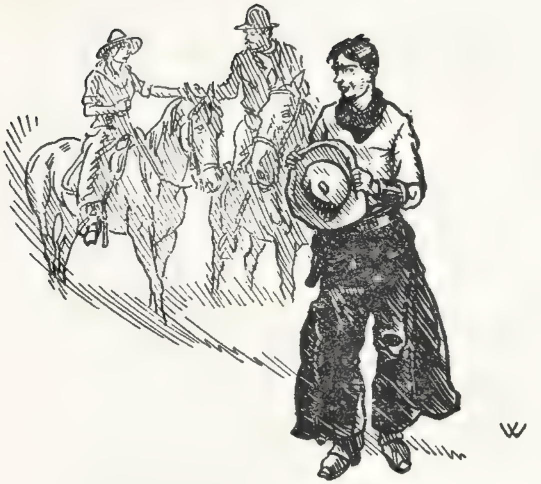
Macartny flung out a hand in the direction of the vanished cruiser.

"She put a shell into us and flattened us out—and knows it. Nothing more heard of us; all right! Given up for lost. No pursuit, no alarm. We can make Honolulu."

"But it's impossible!" yelled Willis frantically. "Our engines are gone!"

"Our canvas holds." Macartny clapped him on the shoulder. "You see how it works out—for men? Takes a man to work things out with Providence. Get for'ard and have faith!"

Willis had no faith. He was not built that way. He scrambled forward, with terror fast upon him. The wounded, crippled *Dryad* went hurtling up the dark bowl of the wild sea, the whole Pacific ahead of her, and at her helm a man who laughed.



THE DECEIVED GUNMAN

By Barry Scobee

Author of "No Law," "Safe Conduct," etc.

HOW come I leave Texas? Well, I got nothin' to hide about it. To keep from killin' a man that's how come. Yes sir. The state wasn't big enough to hold both of us, so I come away.

What? Why didn't I stay and him come away? Well, that's a long story by itself. And besides I wanted to see some o' the United States once.

What? Sure, I know we got the whole afternoon ahead of us with nothin' to do but set here by this store and swap yarns and listen to these eucalyptus trees rattle. But I was learned at home that boys is to be saw and not heard, though I ain't no more a boy. I'm outa sight of twenty and headin' hard for twenty-one.

Yeah, I been doing a man's work for six, seven year. That's what I says to Tippy Rose, says I— Who's Tippy? Why, he's the guy that I left to keep from shooting. Gunman, he is. Got five, six notches filed in his six-pea-shooter. What? Well, maybe I had better pick up at the start—lay a background? Reckon's theh's a heap o' background, all right. Wimmin and deception and intree-gue.

Shootin' too, f'r onestance. You seen what I done to that tomater can while ago. Huh? I know I didn't hit it. You don't have to tell me. Maybe I didn't want to hit it, for all you guys knows. You seen I made it dance and roll. Sure I know that was because the gravel was flying and hitting it. But my bullets was hitting the gravel, wasn't they? I could of drilled it right through the tomater if I had so wished.

And wimmin, f'r twostance. Lolie. She wanted to learn to ride a horse, and I set in to learn her. Smiles would light up her face when she'd see me coming a mile away. And I don't blame her, way I could make myself pop'lar. Spurs with bells on, not these. Boots with crossed pistol design worked in the tops. Green, red and yellow neckerchief. Leather cuffs with girl's face and hearts carved on 'em. Leather chaps with the coyote design in small-headed brass tacks. Biggest hat I could buy. I never see anybody dressed much richer than me, except a few Mexicans.

And Lolie wasn't no slouch. I've seen sunsets no artist could paint, and mountains so durn purty they'd make your throat pinch a little when you're off alone riding by yourself all day, and the world's stilly. But I never see anything that had Lolie skinned. Brown hair and blue eyes and white teeth and slim legs that learned to stick to the saddle like a man's.

She lived in town and come out ten miles ever' morning to teach school over a little bunch of ranch kids that gathered in one place. Drove a flivver with one headlight busted and a door that wouldn't shut. I worked on the O. B. Bar, two, three miles from what they called the schoolhouse, and ever' chance I got, and some I didn't, I went over to learn her how to ride.

I was only an innocent and untootchered boy in those days. No gunman, nothing but just a cowboy. Didn't even own a gun, and never thought that some day I would have to spend my money for one.

The ranch foreman that I worked for was a kind of a finicky guy. He was always pinching around about me going over to see Lolie. Sore because he wasn't pop'lar with the wimmin. Said he was payin' me my wages, not the school board. Finally I got all o' this I could hold and I busted out at him. Natcherly after that I quit him.

That was Saturday. I went back to the ranch house and got my reg'lar bath, and dressed up, and took my work duds and my horse and things and hit for town. I'd never been to see Lolie at her boarding-house, but I meant to go and take her to the Saturday night movie show.

First thing when I hit town Pete Crawford he hollers out to me and says:

"Hey, 'Float' "—that's what they called me, Float— "Hey, Float, hear you're capping for 'Tippy' Rose's game!"

"Capping?" says I. "Tippy Rose? Didn't know he'd went to gambling."

"You been learning that schoolmarm how to ride, ain'tcha?" says Pete.

"Done learned her already," says I.

"For Tippy's benefit," says Pete. "They're out horseback now at the grove. You decoyed her into learning to ride, and now Tippy's winning the percentage on you."

It made me mad for a minute.

"She a-running around with that gun-toter?" I says.

And then I thought Pete was a-joking and told him so. But the sody fountain and drug-store man, named Bogle, was standing in his door and he says the same thing.

"Every evening," he says. "Everybody sees it. All you got to do yourself is turn your head around and look."

I turned around, and about a block away I see Lolie and that Tippy Rose riding across the street on two good riding horses, a sorrel and a gray, going toward where I know Lolie holes up at night. I give her time to get home and then I go into the sody fountain and called her on the phone. I was shakin' so bad my teeth durned near clicked, I was that mad.

"Say, listen, this is Float," I says when she got to the other end. "You been out with Tippy Rose. What you mean riding around with that gun-toter?"

At first silence greets me. I thought she was dumbfounded. Then I hear something like crying.

"You better feel bad, woman," I says, "because I won't stand for that a minute."

And then she does it again and it ain't crying but laughing. I blowed up.

"Look here," I says, "did that crooked-legged old tinhorn gunman tell you to laugh at me thataway?"

"Tinhorn gunman!" she shruck. "Don't you say that, you Float!" She could say Float awful nice when she wanted to, but she didn't want to now. "Float, you be good and careful how you talk," she whizzed on. "Tipton Rose ain't old. And though he has killed five or six men he done it in self-defense. He has explained each killing to me. His heart is as pure as a man's who has never shot nothing more than a rabbit with a twenty-two."

"Listen, Lolie," I says. "Im' not at this end of the line to hear your boostin' of Tippy-canoe. What I want to know is, are you going to give him up? Or are you going to take him as against me?" Yeah, I sawed it off at her just like that.

"Float," she says, "you humiliate me."

"I'll humiliate that tinhorn killer!" I says. "No woman can tamper with my affections. You got to choose between us right now. Him or me. Speak, woman," I says.

And durned if she didn't hang up in my ear. There isn't nothing to make a man madder, in a state where mankind holds a tight rein on their wimmin folks. What? I talk like I been doing some tall thinking on this? Well, say, ain't I though! I've thought it down to its last corner.

And quick as I could get my breath, there in the fountain place and drug-store, I rung her up again.

"Float," I says. "Listen, Lole, you can't pull that stuff on me."

"You listen," she says. "It's well known you can talk longer at one settin' about nothing than anybody outside a banker's conference. And I don't aim to stand here at this phone a-listenin' to you and a-holdin' the receiver till my arm gets cramped into a capital L."

And durned if she didn't hang up in my ear again. No arguing with a loco heifer, thinks I. I was sure hot around the rims. I went out on the sidewalk, wiping the sweat off o' my face, an' I happened to look up at the windows across the street where the phone office was, and there was Essie Keener, the central girl, with her head stuck out and a grinning till you could of counted all her teeth.

"Y'ain't got your aunt doped right, have you, Float?" she sings out.

SHE been listening in. They been joshing me, calling Lolie my aunt. She was only thirty. What's ten years to hearts enmeshed? It made me madder than ever, her bawling out my private affairs to the public.

"You need your jaws slapped," I says up to her. "I'll sue your phone company for damages."

"Y'oughtn't let your Aunt Lolie get away with that line of stuff," Essie sings again, making people in the street stop and listen and grin.

"You—" I says and choked down.

Who was humiliated now? Me. And I see I have to do something quick to redeem myself. So I give Essie my back and hit for the hotel where Tippy Rose lives, my spurs a-rattling and a-ringing.

Boy, but I was sore! I busted into that hotel and I says to Walt Miller behind the book, says I—

"Tippy Rose got back yet?"

"What you fixin' to do to Mr. Rose?" he says. "No, he's out ridin' horseback with his gal."

"His gal!" I says. "Listen, Walt," I says, "I'll leave the message with you. You tell that sawed-off gunman that ain't got but six notches filed in his pea-shooter, you tell him," I says, "that Lolie ain't his girl. She's mine. You tell him to stay strickly away from her domicile. Quit furnishing her riding horses. Don't even tilt his hat at her when he sees her passing by. You tell that fake gun-toter that, Walt," says I, "and quote me strong."

"All right," says Walt. "What's your favorite kind of flowers."

But I went back to the sidewalk without making any prattle to that light stuff.

Outside for a minute I felt kinda missing. Didn't know what to do next. No Lolie to take to the movie show. The night was all gummed up somehow, so I went to my hotel—not the one on Main Street where Tippy lived but a place where you could sleep for fifty cents. But I didn't get my money's worth. I kicked and pitched, like it was a hot night, only it wasn't. Things was going around in my mind—Lolie, and that flivver gun-toter who might shoot me treacherous from behind when I wasn't looking, and Essie Keener and her smart stuff. No, I didn't get to sleep till midnight or after.

Next morning as I was eating a late and light breakfast of ham-and and a few hots and wondering what the day would bring forth, the waiter, "Chango" Brown, leans his elbows down on the counter by my cawffee cup and says he's heard how I defied the gunman up the street, not mentioning any names, and he don't blame me.

"Guy's gotta protect his honor," says Chango. "What you figgering on for your next step, Float?"

"Well," says I, "I'll await developments. If Tippy keeps hands off like I sent him word, all's well and good. But if he don't—well, you savvy, Chango," says I.

"Perfect," says he.

Chango was a gent even if his nickname Chango did mean monkey in Mex. He walked to the door with me as I went out, and we stood there looking around in a general way. And who should we see coming along but Tippy-canoe and Lolie on that pair of fine saddle horses. Tippy never turned his head, but Lolie waves her hand at me light and frisky. I didn't tip my hat, you can bet on that. And Chango says to me—

"That's offensive, them riding together that way after you warned."

"Maybe Walt forget to tell him," I says.

"That was the most insultin' thing I ever witness," Chango went on, and you could tell he was sore on my account. "That woman a-wiggling her hand so dainty."

"It's a bitter pill to chew on," I says between my teeth.

"I can see your manhood simmer," says Chango, "and I don't blame you."

Just then Pete Crawford come up, and he says:

"I seen that dirty work, Float," he says. "You oughta be good and sore."

"I am," says I, "and getting more so constantly."

There was more talk like that, and rallying to me, and Bogle come moseying over from his door, and he says—

"Float, I'm behind you."

"What we need," says Pete, "is a

vigilance committee. Float can't go this lone-handed."

"Can't I?" says I. "This thing ain't outa my hands yet. I'm a vigilance committee by myself," I says. "I'm going to the hotel right now to see if Walt has delivered my message."

And with that I set out, my spurs a-ting-a-linging like those little bells was alive, and my shiny leather cuffs a-glinting in the sun. And I could hear my three friends laughing low together in admiration of me.

Walt said he hadn't forgot. He had told Tippy every word of it.

"Made Tippy kinda mad at first," says Walt. "Don't think he quite knew who you was."

"He'll find out soon enough," I says.

"You better forget all that Wild-West tent show stuff," says Walt, "and go and hunt you up a job where you won't get fired in a couple days so's it'll keep you outa town for a while."

"Fired?" says I. "Did that long-beaked finicky foreman of the O. B. Bar say he fired me yesterday?"

"Never mind that either," says Walt.

You savvy what Walt was driving at, don't you?—trying to turn me off from my vengeance. Wise head, Walt's. He knowed some folks was liable to get hurt, and it wouldn't be me.

"Did Tippy-canoe say he would stay away from my girl?" I asked Walt. "Did he leave a message?"

"Message?" says Walt, blowing smoke thoughtful. "Well, maybe now he did. He said he'd give you a-plenty if the time ever come."

"Oh, he did, did he?" says I. "Threatened me, did he?"

"Reckon you could call it that," says Walt.

"That's the same as telling a man to go heeled," I says, "or warning a feller to shoot. And looks like he don't aim to stay away from Lolie."

I went outside to get room to think in. I took a ride on my horse. And pretty soon I see clear. I see I'm going to have to shoot it out with that outlaw. I been raised on that kind o' corn and I savvy. I'd hoped for a more Christian way of settlement of his misdeeds. But now we'd got horns locked I see there wasn't no honorable way out but guns. A man's got to be a man.

SO I went straight to the store and bought the biggest gun they had. It was second-hand and cost me seven bucks. But it throwed a chunk of lead as big as a hot dog. And that's what I wanted. I craved something big enough so that when it bumped Tippy Rose in the front it would make him set down backward, very useless.

Bought ammunition too, at two dollars and twenty-five cents a box, and rode out to an old 'dobe corral couple miles from town for practise. Taken a wooden box with me, one of them kind that canned corn and tomaters come in, for a target. It was about as high and wide as Tippycanoe's vital front. And that's where I meant to be when the skirmish started—at the front.

I had heard Pete Crawford say if a gunman could hit three times out of five he'd have a fair chance, with some people, to keep out of the hospital hisself. So I figgered if I made three holes in that box out of ever' five blams I could face Tippy-girl-grabber one day and go to his funeral the next.

Practised the draw too, jerking that old cannon from my scabbard, which I went back to town and bought, and blamming away at that box which I'd set up on some 'dobes about as high as Tippy's vital front. I'd step up to a gate like it was a door and step through and there'd be Tippy—the box—standing looking at me, and I'd draw and fire. Or I'd be walking along like on a sidewalk in town, with the posts the other people, for instance, Lolie and Essie, and I'd look up to see Tippy—the box—and I'd draw and boom-boom.

At first I wasn't in practise, nacherly. I shot fifty times that first day and had to go back to town for another box of ca'tridges, at two bucks and two bits, before I'd splintered Tippy—the box—to kindling wood.

I mention this to show what a nifty lead-slinger I got to be, as I demonstrated a while ago with that old tomater can.

But here's what'll make your cigaret go out. Tippy Rose left town that first day after I begin practising. Yessir. Well, maybe I didn't *make* him go, but any rum-dum, nearly, can put two and four together and make a half dozen.

I rode my dun down to Lolie's that evening about dusk—didn't want to talk on the phone on account of certain hear-al ears and a certain sharp grin with Essie behind 'em. Called Lolie out to the gate, I did. And she was puffy before she got there. I could see that in the way she walked.

"Listen—" I says.

"Listen nothing!" says she. "Don't be a dunce, Float. What's this I hear about you practising up at the old corral. What's the big idee?"

"Shootin' holes through the air," says I, "to make my bride a bridal veil."

"Well of all the—!" she says. "Run along and wash your face, Johnny," she says, "and don't get under foot."

Before I could crack down with any more snappy talk she was back in the house. So I returned to town. I didn't go back to see her any more. And her conduc' didn't do Tippy-canoe's hope for a long life any good.

Well, I bought more ammunition and practised every day. Not all the time. Sometimes I'd walk up and down the street. What's the use of having expensive and fancy clo's and keep to the alleys? Now and then Essie Keener would wave down from the phone office and grin. That grin o' hers sure needed dressin' down.

Everybody in town knew pretty soon what I was doing at the old corral, and some of the loafers got to following me out there. They was a nuisance, setting on the 'dobe fence like a row of crows a-cawing for me to "Drill him, Float! Give him a lead bean to chaw, Float! Shoot him in the box, Float!" I put a stop to that. I got up of mornings and went out before they had their breakfast. Or went out at high noon when I wanted to be eating my dinner.

I shot up an awful lot of boxes from the general store. Everybody getting wise to my work at the corral put the store wise I was packing off their boxes. Old man Gray sure raised Cain and said I'd bulletized all his winter kindling wood, and durned if he didn't charge me for it.

But I kep' on. I persisted in despite of obstacles set before me. And step by step I got good. I could hit Tippy—the box—in the vital regions so often I got so I felt sorry for that tinhorn.

And then Tippy come back to town. I knowed he would. He had lots of business, owned a ranch or two and one thing and another. The fast talkers said he had been down to San Anton, to buy him a tailor-made wedding-suit. When I heard that, I kind of begin to see red, or at least pink. I didn't think he'd ever use that new suit.

I figgered Tippy would come out and walk up and down the sidewalk, like he done a time or two before he drilled his man. Walking up and down showing that he was a cool hand on the job. Never saying a word. He was the tightest face you ever see. And he'd walk slow, his hands behind him. He never was in a hurry. He'd meet people and he'd say "Howdy, Pete," or "Morning, Bogle," quiet like and go on, never stop to talk. Well, I figgered he'd be doing that way so I went around to see. I went by the alley door in Chango's res-t'runt and come out through to the main street, so the thing wouldn't happen too sudden. Wanted to give him his chance.

What? Sure, I wanted a chance myself too. It ain't easy to walk up and shoot a man when you ain't used to it. I didn't feel very good. But I knowed I had to get him or he'd get me. That's the way with gunmen.

But Tippy wasn't in sight when I glanced up and down from Chango's door. And all that forenoon he didn't show up. Or in the afternoon neither. I commenced to walk outside myself, quiet like, just sayin' "Howdy, Pete," and "Evenin', Bogle," and keepin' a strick watch up and down that main street. Nobody said anything to me. They just looked. Reckon I had a hard look on my face.

Come after supper I crossed to the other side of the street. By going some ways I could see across the street into the hotel where Tippy lived. And about the fourth or fifth time I went that way, going a little farther each time, I walked up as far as the hotel, and I look across the street when the door is opened, but I can't see no Tippy-canoe.

THEN I come back and started to cross the street over to Chango's place for another cup of coffee. There was a big car a-coming. But I didn't see it till it was close. It bust out all at once with a honk and a shriek, enough to scare ten horses. I jumped like a fool to get out of the way, and my hat fell off. The car run over it, and there was Lolie in the front seat, and Tippy-canoe, and they both laughed at me. And a lot of people on the street laughed. And some of them begin to bandy words at me.

"Tippy wins the duel, Float," they say. "He got you in the hat! You're shot, Float. Go on back home and put your gun up behind the clock."

Well, I wasn't seeing pink then. No soft shades for me. Red. And I go and lean myself against a phone pole in the dark where I can watch the hotel for Tippy to get back. The phone pole makes me think of Essie, and I bet to myself she is listening in on a lot of gossip about me on the phone, and I get madder yet.

Well, come eleven o'clock Tippy drives up in his car and gets out and goes into the hotel. I see him stop by the book and say something to Walt. I don't let no grass grow under my feet. I cross the street and slam into that hotel.

What? Why don't I go on with my story? I'm collecting my thoughts. No, I didn't finish him. But I ain't through yet.

How come I leave before I do him? Like I said, to keep from killing him, and because I wanted to see some of the U. S. also.

I rode away that night on my horse. Rode west into New Mexico. It didn't look much different from Texas. And it took money for eats just the same. It was hard on my clo's, too.

First I sold my chaps with the coyote design in small brass heads so's me and the horse could eat. At the same time I was offered a good riding job on a ranch but I didn't feel like work. I kept on west toward Arizona. Traded my big cannon for this little old pistol and a dollar to boot. Traded my spurs with bells on for a common pair—these I got on—and a dollar thirty-seven, all he had, to boot. Swapped hats and got some boot. I was going down hill fast.

In Arizona I sold my horse and saddle and got on a train and went to Los Angeles and Hollywood to join the movies. But they was full up. How could I compete with them movie cowboys with nothing fancy left but this red, yellow and green neckerchief? I got so ever' time I stopped in a park to rest a cop would show up and begin to ask my fam'ly hist'ry. A guy can't talk good on an empty stomach. Main thing I learn in Los, is that money is the hardest thing in nature to raise. So when a feller says I oughta go up here in the irrigated valleys and glom canteloupes, why I decide to come and glom.

What? Oh, I don't know's a cowboy will look so funny glommin' cants. I don't look or talk funny to start with, do I? I aim to glom enough for the cash to get me back to Arizona, where I sold my horse and saddle, and then work 'em out so's I can ride back into Texas like I only been away on a little leisure trip.

Homesick? No, I ain't homesick. I don't like the rattle of these California eucalyptus trees, but I ain't homesick. I just want to get back to humiliate Tippy Rose. I've thought of a fine way. How? Well, I spent seven dollars for a gun, and two dollars and thirty-five cents for boxes to shoot at, and eighteen boxes of ammunition at two dollars and a quarter a box. I'm going to sue Tippy for it.

What? Oh, not much to tell about that. Yes, Tippy was standing there talking to Walt when I went in. He was laughing, and I didn't like that laugh. I says to him:

"Look here, you with your spinal cord knotted at the end for a head," says I, using a good line I'd read, "you can't take my girl, you can't honk at me in the street and run over my hat and make a fool outa me, and live happy ever afterwards," I says. "And don't call me no kid and decline to fight. I've been doing a man's work six, seven years. Draw your gun, you double-crossin' sneak," says I, "and begin to shoot."

Everything around that hotel was still as midnight when my voice stopped and give the air a chance to rest. Nobody ticked but the clock. And then Tippy spoke, in that polite way he's got when theh's a hen on.

"Looks like you got the drop on me, sir," he said.

I look at my hands, and I am holding my cannon pointed at him. In my hurry I'd pulled it out.

"Return your gun to its scabbard," he said, "and give me a fair start and perhaps we can settle this."

So I put my gun back in the scabbard. I don't tamp it down solid, but I set it back enough to be fair and at the same time jerk it out quick. By that time Tippy has come close up to me so quiet I hardly know it, and before I can make another move he fools me.

Yessir. He deceived me. I reckon theh's never been a gunman deceived as bad as I was. Tricked. Complete.

HE GRABBED my wrists, and he turned me around quick, before I know what is happening or can brace myself, and he grabs me again by the arms behind, and he gives me the bum's rush outa that hotel, kicking me behind at every other step. Finally I land in the street and half the population is there, seems like, to welcome me and pick me up.

So I left that night. Yeah, to keep from killing him. If I had stayed around there I'd of shot him down like a dog, and been hung for it. I'm going back and sue him for fifty-one dollars and eighty-five cents, which it cost me to get ready for the fight, which he deceived me about. I'll need the dough for some new clo's, because I'm figgerin' on marrying that Essie Keener to get even with her for her conduc'.

Well, there's a car coming. I'll try to bum a ride in it up to the valley and get busy riding them bucking canteloupes. S'long, boys, see yuh later maybe.

KOKOMO BIRDS

by Andrew A. Caffrey

BLANK of face and wordless, they'd come to stall around the great, ancient gate of gray Canclaux. The Yank guard on post got so much silent attention that he felt like a general; and the restless groups of Americans, within the walls, were studied at a distance and at length, at great length. Awed by their newly-arrived ally, the French seemed willing to feel him out slowly; but, the ice once broken, they'd swap talk with the vociferous *soldat Américain.* The swap was even—the only place that the French failed to best us—in that neither understood the other. Their talk, always accompanied by much hand-play, centered on Canclaux. Now and then we caught the word Bonaparte; fact is, we caught it more often than just now and then.

St. Maxient—the town wherein Canclaux barracks aged—had a schoolmaster; and the schoolmaster had all the education. Soft-spoken and unassuming, he had teamed-up enough French and English to give us a rough idea of what it was all about—this hand-waving and Bonaparte talk.

"Napoleon," he said, "once used Canclaux as his headquarters. Those three windows, there on the second floor, were the windows of the very room." The room spoken of was our American headquarters at the time. Major Orr slept there all day—every day—and got in trim for the night—every night—at the Café de Cheval Blanc. War was —— on majors.

What was then Canclaux Barracks had, before the division of church and state, been the monastery of St. Maxient. The ravages of political strife had left the ancient pile as was, intact. Physically, its grandeur had not waned. Three wings, constituting the barracks, towered above the cloister's ornate inner courtyard, while the great cathedral of St. Maxient formed and closed the fourth side of the square and looked down from its gargoyled heights upon all, including the hilled town to which it had given a name. All former entrances to the cathedral, that is, entrances from the barrack wings, had long since been walled in solid; barracks ribaldry stopped at that fourth, silent wall. Souvenir-hunting also stopped there; but it was respect, not walls, that turned that great American offensive.

Elsewhere, anywhere in the three wild wings, souvenir-hunting was good. Cooks and kitchen police worked on shift wearing gaudy, bespangled epaulets; each man, in every one of the many outfits, had scratched out, from between the floor boards of the attic, at least a few of the Little Corporal's uniform buttons; and, early in the American occupation, hidden away in a far, dark corner, under the roof, had been found Bonaparte's other bed. Napoleon Bonaparte had held headquarters at St. Maxient. Strike me pink if he hadn't!

"Outside of that," demanded "Cocky" Kane, "outside of him stopping in St. Maxient because he didn't stop in the next town, what has St. Maxient ever had besides lots of bad weather?"

The schoolmaster was slow on the comeback. Enough for him, and the good people of St. Maxient, that they had had Bonaparte; the glory had not ended with his

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"Kokomo Birds," copyright, 1926, by Andrew A. Caffrey

passing. "Is it not enough," pleaded the schoolmaster, "to have been honored thus in the past, and now, from time to time, to be favored with his visits?"

"How do you mean that?" drawled the gateway guard on post, Private Mathery; finest, most efficient sleep-walker in the A. E. F.

"Very often, in the dead of night, the emperor returns to his headquarters," said the Frenchman.

"We're being kidded," bellowed Cocky, "let me at that guy." Private Mathery hauled him back and piled the irate Cocky through the gate.

But the schoolmaster had proselyted a grown-up pupil; Mat, as before mentioned, was a whale of a somnambulist, so he naturally fell hard for anything along that line. Sound asleep, he could carry on a running conversation or walk post. It was hard to tell just when he was or was not in coma. If a stranger, you'd have to ask one who knew him better; then, the correct answer would be nothing better than a wild guess. So Mat was an easy convert to the bust-of-Napoleon club.

And the town was there to back up the schoolmaster; the town of St. Maxient had little, but what it had it was sure of, even if only a ghost. And the ghost, so they said, walked.

DURING that day several new outfits arrived at St. Maxient. Among these was a trick detachment of flying officers. Its members, all Yanks of course, had been transferred from the several Allied air services, and, through their mixed uniforms, showed it. Out of sorts, out of jack, out of luck and wandering about France, they were as so many supply-sergeants, friendless; the dogs barked at them, and the French kids lacked the gall to mooch their bully-beef. Lieutenant Jack Long, of all that motley, straggling mob, was the only one who could still smile as he stretched his six foot six through the arched gate.

Once having seen Jack Long's total length, you'd never be likely to forget it. Then, when your eyes fell several feet, to the approximate neighborhood of his belt, your attention would be smilingly glued to the reading matter adorning the musette bag which humped and bumped across the small of his back. The reading matter was strictly A. E. F., and somewhat rough. But it was not uncommon to find rough reading matter on barrack-bags, musettes and foot-lockers over there where nothing seemed to count. We're in polite company now. So we must censor part of the wording on Long's bag. Enough to say that the near-poetry adorning his equipment attested to the fact that "LONG JOHN LONG WAS LONG GONE FROM AND LONGED FOR KOKOMO."

"There's a bird I must get to meet," determined Private Mathery. "A bird from the old home town, a Kokomo bird. Wonder if I know him?"

As those new outfits came in that day, Mat heard the loungers about the gate ask their where-are-you-from's? until his head was a-swim with that well-known query. Everybody in France wanted to know where everybody else was from; and nobody really cared.

That night, on the ten-till-midnight guard trick, Mat walked the lonesome back-wall post. That post was the lowest down of all. You felt as mean as an M.P. while walking it; for all your pals, coming home with a "heat" on, were counting on climbing that wall in order to beat the guard line. If you had a ripe officer of the day, taking the war seriously, well, you had to grab and turn in your own gang. There were plenty of hard, silent battles fought on that post. Strange, but the Army gives no credit for such worth-while battles.

Canclaux was under quarantine. None save Major Orr, Major Orr's dog-robber and the major's personal friends were permitted to stagger abroad after dark. A few others got out; fewer got back, uncaught; the clink housed many petty offenders.

Along toward the top hour—it was blacker than the well-known tomb that night—Mat heard the usual, frequent scratching and climbing on the A.W.O.L. side of the wall. He fell back a little deeper into the shadows, intending to emulate the monkey that sees nothing. In the darkness, Mat heard feet come to and splash the mud within the yard. The newcomer, evidently waiting to accustom his eyes to the surroundings, did not move for fully a minute; then, when he did, it was in the wrong direction. Locating the very indefinite Mat, he approached casually.

"You've got the goods on me, guard," said Jack Long from Kokomo, "I'm not asking you to take any chances. Call your corporal, I'm cold."

Silently, Mat studied the great length of the visitor.

"I noticed you when you arrived to-day," said he, recognizing the long one. "I'm from your town. We Kokomo birds must stick together." The latch of a door rattled; Mat said, "Fan it, buddy," and Lieutenant Long had vanished without a good look at the other man from Kokomo.

A few days flowed by, a few days of rain and mud and clouds. Mat's outfit, because the quarantine had blessed the workless others, furnished all the guard every day. That was hard graft, but now and then, he found time to quiz the schoolmaster. He was getting a heavy idea of the royal ghost.

"Bonaparte," confided the humble, plodding pedagogue, "has returned often during this war; his spirit still leads our men of France."

When Mat first went off his feed it looked like love. It was not love; Mat had no need for other food—he was eating the stuff that the schoolmaster was feeding to him. At times Mat had been seen walking post with two fingers of his right hand tucked into the breast flap of his blouse; the left arm being carried behind and across his back. The stride was Napoleonic; the kid was there.

"Before you Americans took over Canclaux," continued his friend, "the French troops, then quartered here, had many visits. Always, shortly after midnight, he comes back to his old headquarters on the second floor, under the three arched windows."

"Don't waste any of this information on our cognac-hounds," advised Mat. "They only believe in one ghost and it has not walked since we landed in France."

Mat might have added: when that ghost does walk, St. Maxient will see many things other than mere, shifting, shapely shadows.

THERE came a day when a paymaster's car wheeled through the gate of Canclaux. The eagle screamed and the ghost walked. Hurrying lines of anxious men, affirming their Army names, scooped French jack into extended hats, and bee-lined for the back wall. Shades of Napoleon! What a night!

When each had taken on his capacity in flu-medicine there followed an epidemic of sheet procurement. Throughout the night every last nook and corner of St. Maxient was visited by staggering, stumbling, playful Yank ghosts. The always-willing M.P. gathered them up, and, with as little ceremony as possible, forced each hilarious victim into the *celle de garde* via the courtyard door. Anybody but an M.P. would have noticed that that jail had received its capacity quota long before midnight; but only an M.P. would have waited until morning before discovering that the street door had been forced. It was quite inconvenient for the ghosts; they were compelled to walk through the two doors of that guard-house on their way back to town and the old haunting grounds.

Two of the command did not get lit that night, Mat and Major Orr. Mat never touched the stuff, and the major was not the kind of man to get oiled up every time the opportunity presented itself; no, not when it was so easy for a major to get cockeyed once and stay so.

All during the next day the white gang came straggling home, were unsheeted, made the carpet, allotted company punishment and strove, in diverse ways, to get that old sock taste out of morning-after mouths. A few made the guard-house for a stay. When evening came Cocky Kane was missing; not on deck at retreat. He had not been seen any place this side of the pay-table.

Kane was a supreme extremist. He was expected to go the limit and never fell short.

The lusty tide of liquor had ebbed; quiet again under a leaden evening sky, Canclaux resumed its great gray dignity. In the streets, below the silent marker of time, not a ghost walked abroad.

Echoing and reechoing through the long tiled corridors, the twelve o'clock relief posted its men. Mat fell out and took over number three. As he did so, Major Orr guessed his way down the long, dark corridor, turned left, through headquarters, and entered his bedroom, adjoining.

Post Number 3 covered the long, second-floor promenade overlooking, through its many arches, the cloistered courtyard below, and faced the towering cathedral beyond.

The man on number three kept an eye on headquarters—the door was always open—and passed and repassed every few minutes during his vigil. Where the passage received light through its arches, the darkness was no greater than that in the courtyard and of night without, but, at either end, where it passed on and into the north and south wings, you could cut the gloom. You walked one way and faced the other; thought hard on things that you never before dreamed of; and wondered if all that ghost talk had anything behind it. When you walked into those black corridors, St. Maxient, and all the spooky tradition of St. Maxient, pressed heavily upon you. Nobody believes in them, but—there might be such things as ghosts, after all.

Mat was tired and cold. Time dragged slowly. For a moment he loitered before the open door of headquarters. Faintly flickering across the floor, he could detect signs of remaining fire in the great stove. A good guard fell by the wayside. Across those noisy tiled floors, Mat figured, one would be sure to hear the officer of the day, were that transient individual to make his rounds. Mat would just sit near the stove for a minute, keep one eye open and an ear peeled.

He did sit near the stove; and slumber came like a ton of brick on Mat.

IN THE darkness, upon entering, Mat had failed to notice that sad-faced, gayly uniformed little guy behind Major Orr's desk. The keen, beady eyes—the lock of hair across his forehead—the medals and sunburst on his left breast; ——! it was old Nap himself, or Mat was a cock-eyed liar.

The peerless leader, feet on desk, tilted back at a dangerously critical angle. With an amused smile, he studied his booted feet, raised the right from where it had rested across the left, and, on a short reach, fell to examining the attached spur.

"They're great things," said Napoleon, half aloud; "spurs such as these just will not let your feet slip off the desk."

The middle one of those three arched windows was now a leather-faced door; it swung open and some one came in, noiselessly. The new arrival—it was Constant, Bonaparte's *valet de chambre*—crossed the room and addressed the emperor:

"A number of your generals, sire, request an audience."

For a long time Napoleon considered the request. He toyed with the keys of a typewriter and, in Mat's estimation, seemed to be getting sore. Eventually, he must grant the audience; he expected trouble ahead. It was with acrid derision that he broke the spell:

"These bozos are beginning to weaken," said the Man of Destiny. "Constant, do they not know that any war is a good war just as long as you do not weaken?"

"It's Marmont, the Marshal Marmont, that's red-flagging your old guard," said Constant. "That guy's a regular bulshivicky. He and his gang want to end this war and get back into Paris; the Yanks are spending all kinds of jack there and it's easy sponging for French officers. Paris it is; nothing else will do. You, sire, have caved in their chests with pretty medals, and they wish to wear them on the boulevards."

"That's the curse of the French," mused the Corsican. "Gay rags—the boulevards—Paris." His voice trailed away on the last word and lost its bitterness, as if, perhaps, Paris meant something to him, also.

With great effort he fought to control his mounting anger. The fight failed; he had something on his chest other than self-awarded medals and intended to get it off:

"Constant, the French have always had the wrong slant on the glory of war. For them, a day in the field, a new marching song, gay rags and a chance to wear them—that's glory. That's bunk! Wrong—all wrong." His utter disgust for the idea that was all wrong weighed heavily upon him; but he came back strong with a vitalization of the right thing:

"Asses! Dumb-bells! A fat lot they know of glory. Glory of war lies in the fact that you took in lots of territory—that you cut deep—turned the world red and bleached her white, and that down through the ages you will be remembered. Spilling lots of blood—that's glory stuff—pulling many boners—outmarching your return possibilities—losing armies—getting generations of little guys to place large busts on larger desks—that, Constant, is glory with a capital G."

Minutes followed during which Napoleon meditated. He vainly shook, rapped and strove to make a fountain pen write without ink.

"This," said he, holding the defunct pen before Constant, "is like my musical comedy generals, never there when I want it." He hurled the pen into the coal scuttle at Mat's feet, and, half-heartedly, concluded, "Show them in; this war is spoiling the army."

Constant crossed the room and opened the middle window which was a leather-faced door. An imposing figure, followed by several hardly less imposing dressers, entered. The first was Marshal Marmont.

After the generals had fallen in before their emperor, Constant closed the door and resumed his position near Napoleon. The latter signaled Marmont to step forward.

Mat was, in no small way, impressed by the dignity and importance of the gathering. It lost some of its prestige, however, when Marshal Marmont presented his compliments and the great Bonaparte said, "Hello," and asked, "where are you from?"

"So that's the kind of a guy Napoleon is," thought Mat. "No wonder he was a corporal; he wouldn't make a good buck; I hate guys who ask that question."

Marshal Marmont, acting as spokesman for the mutinous generals, was asking Napoleon to call it off; to end the war. The talk, as far as Mat could gather, sounded very incongruous. They seemed to be men of an old war speaking in terms of today. These generals, with armies already beyond the Rhine, were fed up and wished to turn back; that, as Mat saw it, looked not so good.

He realized that this was no place for him to horn in, but he also knew that the French had things coming their way, for, with America in, they could not lose. He wanted to tell them so. He wondered if Napoleon would fall for a cold quitting such as the generals advocated.

Bonaparte paced the floor. Back and forth before those three arched windows, he slowly measured each stride. A change was coming upon him; he was making the grade. As the watching generals studied that supreme egotist, there came slowly the realization that the change was not in their favor. Mat, too, noted the change but felt happy.

The pacing ended and a hard-boiled Napoleon, still standing, faced his subordinates. He was as determined now as a second loot.

"Back in 1813—" Napoleon spoke as if remembering hurt—"you came to me as you do now. With our armies beyond the Rhine, you begged me to return. You were afraid to cross the Elbe; afraid to go on. I turned back. You were happy—happy—and the glory of France passed, ended."

He had ceased talking. He desired to have the thing sink in. For, Frenchmen will still believe in the glory of France when that glory stuff is out at the seat, run over at the heels and begging sous or sniping butts in the market-place at high noon.

The mutinous generals acted like paid mourners, earning their pay. Mat was elated. History, he knew, was in the making. He had a front seat.

"This time we do not turn back." Napoleon laid that down cold. Mat felt that cheering was in order but held off.

Marmont was dying hard.

"Sire—" his voice carried doubt, and, shifting from foot to foot, he seemed at a loss to understand the motive behind his superior's stand—"what is to be gained by going into Berlin?"

"Reparations," said Napoleon, "reparations for France and police dogs for America."

Marmont took a hooked poke at a major-general who had dozed and stepped on his, Marmont's, spurs. He had lost out and was sore. High-rankers are like that—thin-skinned.

"Though all my generals, and all France, fail me," went on Napoleon, "the allied armies go east; it's Berlin or bust."

Mat and Constant were the only ones trailing with the speaker. Mat was with him all the way, taking it all in and aching to voice his support.

When Napoleon shot his final bolt, Mat broke his silence—

"Though you all fail me," he had said, "with the first and second American Armies behind me, I'll go on."

"Atta boy, Nap," Mat had chirped. "Atta boy; you tell 'em."

Surprized, the generals had turned and faced the unknown interloper. Constant moved a step forward, then, hesitated, and turned to his master as if seeking orders to execute the bum's-rush on the intruder. Napoleon came to his feet, slowly.

With a smile, inbred and crossed with trouble, he walked to the stove and sized up Mat from head to foot. The ill-fitting uniform of the Yank enlisted man amused him; he turned to his generals and made a wisecrack about the burlap raiment. They, in turn, laughed. Confused and abashed, Mat underwent the close scrutiny in silence.

Then with legs spread wide apart and the right hand at his breast, Napoleon seemed to be enjoying the interruption and situation. He spoke kindly to Mat, but it was the awful question again—

"Yank, where are you from?"

LIEUTENANT JACK LONG was officer of the day. Along toward one o'clock, on his between-midnight-and-dawn inspection of the guard, he wondered what made the man on post Number 3 so hard to find. For a minute he hesitated in the doorway of headquarters. As his eyes tried and pierced the darkness, he discovered the stove-warmer in kind repose. He had found his man.

There followed a great battle there in the dark headquarters. Lesser men would have grabbed that guard, clapped him in the can and avoided a battle; such is the easy way of lesser men. Jack Long knew his book. He knew that sleeping on guard ranks as the unpardonable, cardinal sin of arms. That man, sleeping there at the stove, had broken the first rule and the last rule of service. That guard—the darkness withheld his identity—was accountable to Jack Long and the latter was duty bound by and to a solemn oath. Yet, he hesitated.

He could do either one of two things; but each had its drawbacks. If he awoke the man, bawled him out and sent him back on post, at heart, he'd feel better. But this man might talk, brag about it. The risk was great. If he put him under arrest—arrest! Everything that was long Jack Long fought hard to keep long Jack Long from putting a man under arrest. The battle went on.

That was a hard scrap for a man to face alone in the dark; very hard for a man who liked the right and the light. And, for Jack Long, there was little light coming up. Perhaps he was taking this military stuff too much to heart; wonder if an older officer wouldn't pass it up and overlook the whole —— shooting-match. Nine chances out of ten, it was just a kid sleeping there; a kid from somewhere back in the sunshine of our unmilitary land: There were few old service men in the command. Put a kid under arrest—that thing stuck hard where it hurt Jack Long the most. But his oath?—After all, that oath came first; then, give him half a chance, and he'd go to —— and back for anybody.

The man who moved slowly toward the stove had lost his battle; the man who had seen his duty and was about to perform that office had won, but felt no glory in the hollow, colorless victory; he hated self and loathed the job at hand.

When Jack Long had reached headquarters door, he was just a few seconds too late. He had not heard Napoleon ask—

"Yank, where are you from?"

Mat, somewhat awed by the illustrious reputation of his questioner and surprized at hearing that asinine query from such a man, had been slow to answer. The delay was good.

Jack Long, about to place a cold, hesitating hand on the sleeper's shoulder, was just in time to catch Mat's answer—

"Kokomo, sir, from Kokomo."

That cold, hesitating hand hesitated yet more; it never reached its destination. It took no great battle then—but a short drag on recent memory—for Jack Long to settle things, for he was strong in the belief that "we Kokomo birds must stick together." He back-stepped toward the door.

At the water-cooler, next to the exit, he paused long enough to wet a handkerchief. When the linen had taken on one hundred per cent. saturation, plus, Jack Long turned. He took slow, deliberate aim and turned it loose. As the wet sop reached Mat's face, Jack Long quietly tip-toed down the dark corridor.

When one is asleep, a wet sop is an awful thing to stop with an unsuspecting face. Mat, holding the wet handkerchief in his hand, gazed about for Bonaparte, Constant, Marmont and the gang. They had left when the trouble started, and Mat was beginning to guess a little clearer; somebody had gone to bat for him.

He was about to return to his neglected post when sounds of commotion within came from Major Orr's room. The door at his back led into that chamber. As he turned to listen, the door swung open with violence, and the major, pajama-clad, bolted into his arms. We'll give Mat the benefit of the doubt and say that he thought fast and all in one place; his hand went up and he landed the wet sop on the C.O.'s always feverish brow, just like a bell-boy.

"Boy, that's what I wanted; wow, what a head," groaned the major, then, recalling his real trouble—"my room's haunted.

Guard, I saw a ghost—came from under my bed."

Mat stared into the dark room. Something moving, something ghost-like and white, was sitting on the major's bed. It appeared to be pulling on a pair of boots.

"See it, there it is," whispered Orr. "Look it's coming out." He retreated to a place of safety behind his on-the-job guard and felt thankful for the two-way, quick and willing service of that prompt enlisted man.

The ghost was coming out; it came out. With a thumping of boots and a rattling of spurs, very unsteadily, that spooky apparition crossed headquarters room, went on through the main door and passed into the long, dark corridor, in the direction of the enlisted quarters.

Major Orr returned to his room but not to sleep. Under orders, Mat guarded the door until the next relief took over the post. Headquarters rated a guard; the major made it a permanent one.

Business at headquarters next morning was all hay-wire; his dog-robber could not find the major's boots.

Later in the day, one of the room orderlies located the boots, spurs and all, under Cocky Kane's bunk. Cocky still slept heavily. As he snored there, you could not help notice the sheet in which he was wrapped. He was, perhaps, the only enlisted man in France with a sheet.

BOSUN OF THE SAMARKAND

A Complete Novelette

By

Frederick Moore

Author of "The King of the Beachcombers," "The Secret of the Timor Laut," *etc.*

"I 'OPES I never sees my folks again if that boat comin' in ain't from a steamer! And it's a lifeboat!"

Nicholas Markin lowered the battered field-glasses from his eyes and turned to his wife. She was standing on the hotel veranda looking over his shoulder toward the narrows which gave entrance to the little bay of the only port of Kroon's Island.

"There's a woman in that boat, Nick," said Mrs. Markin, her blue eyes squinted against the sea-blink of the morning sunlight. It was early, and the birds were chattering under the low-hanging eaves of thatch, gabbling in the tops of the near-by pawpaw trees and in the palm grove that stretched from hotel to the beach of the bay.

"That means a crimson shipwreck 'ereabouts, Daisy," went on Markin. There was excitement in his voice, and satisfaction on his thin sunburned face. He was a frail little man. Their hotel, which was also something of a trading station, had not housed a paying guest for three months—and the last guest had died of fever without leaving any funds to pay a large bill for board and room.

"So it's a shipwreck!" said Mrs. Markin irritably. "I don't see anything to gloat about in the fact there's a shipwreck!"

"Means a bit of tin for us, I'd say," replied Markin, as the glasses went back to his eyes.

"You ever see anybody who was shipwrecked who expected to put up any money for grub and lodgin'?"

"I'll bet it's one of them Dutch steamers that's got in trouble in the big blow," went on Markin, intent on the approaching boat.

"Fat chance we've got of makin' money out of Dutch passengers from a Dutch teapot of a steamer," scorned Mrs. Markin, as she turned away in disgust. An American, tall and violently blond, she had drifted from port to port along the China coast in her younger days, living extravagantly when she had the money, and in time managing to acquire a surplus of funds which had enabled her to change her mode of life. A wealthy tourist in Shanghai accused her of theft, and she found it desirable to leave, though the charge was abandoned when the complaint was not pressed. Finding it more convenient to have a husband in her wandering, she had married Markin. Originally Mrs. Markin had been a pretty woman of that shallow pictorial type, but the tropics are hard on blondes, and her beauty faded rapidly; she was still a good-looking woman, when she took the trouble to attend to the matter. The three years she had been at Kroon's Island had not improved either her looks or her temper.

Markin was a dapper little man, with crafty blue eyes, straw-colored hair with a little mustache to match, both sun-faded. He had been a steamship steward, but when he married his wife he was living by his wits in the ports. It was on his

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"The Bosun of the Samarkand." *Copyright, 1926, by Frederick Moore.*

advice that his wife had sunk all her capital into the "grass hotel" at Kroon's Island. But the place had seen its best days, the plantations having been abandoned as steamer routes and trading schooners began to operate more to the westward, so that Kroon's Island was not a profitable port of call except for a few vagrant traders. Now and then Markin sold a cargo of copra and other jungle products, the latter being brought in by the natives. And now Mrs. Markin bore her husband something of a grudge for having impoverished her. She had renamed the hotel "Eagle House," having in mind some hostelry at home.

"Yus, there's passengers in that boat!" declared Markin with finality, as if the point had been questioned.

Mrs. Markin turned and strode along the veranda to him again.

"Nick," she remarked in a tired voice, "you're the best little press agent the poorhouse has ever had."

"Leave me alone, Daisy," retorted Markin. "I say we'll make money out of this crowd—shipwreck or no shipwreck."

Mrs. Markin waved a beckoning hand to the old Chinese who was watering the blossoms of the little garden spots before the house. The beds were marked out by circles of broken coral, and the old fellow seemed not a bit interested in the fact that guests were in sight for the hotel.

"Quong Hing! You clean this side," called Mrs. Markin, with an interpreting gesture. The Chinese nodded.

"Better see that this veranda is swept, and some hammocks and tables laid out," she went on, speaking to her husband.

"And change your dress, my jewel," said Markin gleefully. "If this lady is a swell, we've got to put on some swank—and make the place respectable like."

"You'd better get out of them filthy pants—and set the boys to polishing up the bar and tidyin' around the place. You let things run down until the place looks more like a livery stable than a hotel."

Markin was wearing a pair of dirty khaki trousers, a sleeveless shirt, and rubber-soled tennis shoes much battered and worn-down. His face was covered with a rusty growth of beard which was not obtrusive due to its background of red-burned skin. He went for days without shaving when there were no strangers about.

"The bar's all right, Daisy, and—I say! I'm blinkin' right! That's a lifeboat! They've stuck a bit of colored rag up on a stick in 'er stem! One of them Dutcher boats was caught in that blow a couple of nights back, and jolly well ripped 'erself open!"

Mrs. Markin borrowed the glasses and looked at the approaching boat.

"I'd say, mostly sailors in that boat," she asserted. "And that means little money for us—but you'll have an excuse for gettin' drunker'n usual, Nick."

"Now, look 'ere, Daisy," insisted Markin, ignoring her criticism. "You know wot this means? W'y, we're likely to 'ave a whole shipload down on us, breakin' their necks for a bit o' grub and plenty of drinks to 'earten 'em up a bit! I says as 'ow this may only be the first boatload—and we must be the nearest post!"

She looked at him with new interest in her eyes.

"Maybe you're right, Nicky! I'd better fancy up a bit, as you say. This wrapper's not the thing for the owner of this hotel to be wearin'—'specially, women comin' off a steamer." She gave up the glasses and disappeared through a near-by *kajang* into her private living quarters at the far end of the veranda.

Quong Hing now appeared on the veranda with a palm broom, and began to sweep.

"Look 'ere, Quong! You sling some blinkin' 'ammicks, savvy? And tables and chairs. You fix 'em number one. Plenty cash this side now."

MARKIN took a final look at the boat before changing his clothes. She was now well inside the distant narrows, dancing over the sunlit swells, rowed swiftly by four men. She rose and fell by the head as she climbed or descended a swell, and at times Markin could see well into her. There was a man and a woman sitting in the stern sheets. The man wore a white suit, and the woman was in blue, with a sun-helmet on her head. From the helmet a blue puggaree fell over her shoulders as protection against the sun. The slight morning breeze sometimes lifted the light fabric of the puggaree and blew it to one side, so that it appeared to be a pennant. It was this which had at first confused Markin about the rag on a stick, about which he had been mistaken.

Three of the rowers were plainly native seamen, by their turbans and brown bare arms; the fourth rower was a white man by his canvas hat and dark shirt. The rowers were skilful, so Markin knew they could not be passengers from a wrecked steamer saving themselves with a boat.

Three nights before Markin had observed the Dutch steamer which regularly headed to the southward on her run to Java—he knew her for the *Anjar*. It was this steamer which, he had seen against the horizon at sunset, which had apparently been in the thick of the blow of the night after, rolling from the southward. With his knowledge of the sea, Markin was sure that the *Anjar* must have walked straight into the storm. But he also knew that these people in the boat, dressed as they were, must have had ample time to get away without great danger. They had taken to the boat in orderly fashion, and that did not mean sudden foundering of the *Anjar;* and what Markin considered more important was the fact that the passengers had been able to save their valuables. And if one boat had left the steamer with passengers, there must be more boats coming, provided all were heading for Kroon's Island. Therefore Markin saw a rich profit for himself and his wife with the hotel filled with well-to-do refugee passengers.

"Blime me!" he remarked under his breath. "Looks as if my luck 'as changed at last! I'll freshen up a bit. If a lot of toffs should come off that steamer, there's always a watch or two to be picked up, and who's to be sure of wot's lost after a shipwreck? Shipwrecks is always rich pickin's for them as know a thing or two."

He slipped through a *kajang* into his own room, and when he came out on the veranda again it was a new Nicholas Markin; now he wore a pipe-clayed sun-helmet of tremendous size; white duck coat of the best Shanghai cut, white trousers with knife-edge creases and the bottoms turned up into cuffs, revealing white silk socks and canvas shoes. He revealed a flash of color in a crimson silk cummerbund wrapped about his middle over his belt, and he carried a light malacca stick in his hand. His lean face was shaven to the blood, and he wore a green necktie that matched the underlining of his sun-helmet's brim. From a ratty little man, unkempt and unshaven, he had transformed himself into a typical "bunder" and might easily have been mistaken for a prosperous clerk from an export or shipping house. He sported a watch-fob of gold on a black ribbon from the lower fold of the cummerbund—a watch which he had filched from a tourist in Hong Kong. Nicholas Markin was wanted in more than one place for picking pockets—and worse.

"'Ave you finished your primpin', old dear?" Markin called to his wife.

"Don't worry about me," came the reply from a *kajang*. It seemed his wife had her mouth full of hairpins.

"They're comin' up close now," he reported, taking a careful squint at the boat. "I'll drop down to the beach and extend the 'and of welcome. You stick 'ere and play the lady of the manor."

"Order received and filled," came the retort.

"A bit of reserve on your part with the guests, you know. Swank is wot does it in this business. We're runnin' a 'igh-class 'otel, y' know. And you might mark up the prices on that old bill-o'-fare—it's a bit wangled and spotty by this time. And 'ave the 'ouse-boys put cloths on the bar-tables, with the best silver."

"Look here, yourself!" came the tart advice of his wife from her room. "While you're givin' orders, Nick Markin, I want you to be reminded of the fact that you're not to get drunk first pop."

"Now don't go bashin' me about like that afore the guests, Daisy, old girl," objected Markin. "They'll look to me as the landlord' ere, even if you does own the place. It ain't class to 'ave family rows goin' on."

"Then mind your own manners," she replied. "I know you of old, Nick—you'll hobnob with the sailors and be nicely juiced up by tiffin."

"No flamin' fear of me goin' bungy on the booze, if there's cash to be made, Daisy. But don't mind if I find out wot's to be found out from these sailors. They'll know a thing or two, and I'll 'ave to chum up with one of the chaps. I'm no fool."

"That's all very well. I've heard the likes of that before. But just mind this little note for the future, beginnin' now—if you're drunk while this mob is here, I'll pull your skin over your head when they're gone!"

"Right-oh, m' dear! Remember, swank is wot does it. We got to be 'igh-class, day and night. Give me a bit of an edge, Daisy, and maybe there'll be a nice di'mond bar-pin found in the wreckage for you when our guests depart."

"I'll have to tie your hands at night, I can see that, Nick. Mark my word—you go easy on that pickpocket stuff. If you're caught, it's my hotel that gets the black eye —and I'll be pinched in the bargain."

"Now, Daisy, don't be a blinkin' fool."

"Well, if you see anything good, you let me know before you start to cop it. You know, I'm in on the pickings—so don't try to hold out on your bride, Nick."

"Now you're talkin' straight, old girl," chuckled Markin. "I knew you wouldn't be of a mind to let something good slip past. So ta-ta. I'm away." He departed into the palm grove and followed the path of broken coral to the beach in order to direct the rowers to the best landing beach.

II

A FEW natives began to gather at the edge of the jungle down beyond the boat beach. The word had been passed to the little jungle settlements that a boat was coming. It was a brilliant morning and the jungled hills were reflected in the blue water along the edges of the bay. The sea outside glittered in the sun, and it was against this flaming background that Markin squinted his eyes as he watched the oncoming boat.

When he got to the soft white sand, Markin turned off to the left for the boat beach, where rows of *prahus* were pulled up, keels in air. He waved his arm to the approaching rowers so they would shift their course a little to make for the ground ahead. There the shingle sloped sharply and the boat could put her bows almost into dry sand above the water line.

The man in white in the stern sheets spoke to the rowers, and they turned to look toward Markin, resuming when they were on the new course. And in a few minutes the oars flew upward, and the white man on the after thwart stood up and turned to bawl to Markin—

"'Ow far out do we take bottom?"

"Run straight up 'ere," directed Markin. "But back water and check 'er afore you strikes shore."

"Aye, aye, mister," and the big fellow sat down and bent to the oars. In a few minutes the boat was gliding gently to the shingle, the oars backed and shipped.

"Blow me, if you ain't from the *Anjar!*" cried Markin, as he saw the name lettered in black on the bows.

"Right you are," replied the white sailor, who was now standing. The turbaned sailors had gone overboard and were beaching the boat.

"You means to say the *Anjar's* lost?"

"She ain't lost exactly, matey. But she climbs a reef lawst night like a blawsted camel 'ookin' acrost a wall, and sticks there with 'er 'ead pointed for the blinkin' stars."

"She went past 'ere a couple o' nights back," said Markin.

"You didn't see nothin' worth while, matey," said the big fellow. "We 'ad a regular Drury Lane melodrama with 'er in the finest twister you ever seed 'ereabouts."

"More boats comin'?"

"Not as I knows of. I'm Pilkins, a passenger—and a seaman of sorts. I go bosun. I don't say as there's more boats comin'. The *Anjar*, she'll most likely claw 'erself off at next 'igh water, but it won't be from anything the blinkin' square'eads do about it. They're fair cock-eyed. She springs a leak first, in the blow, and 'eads back this way, and climbs the Sawtooth Reef, sixty mile away. We 'ad a fair wind most o' the way 'ere." He clambered over the stowed sail and jury mast and jumped to the beach.

"But why no more boats?" demanded Markin. "The lot of 'em should be follerin' along."

"Not likely," said Pilkins. "This party o' mine was fed up with the performance the *Anjar* put on—didn't like the blinkin' stage-manager, 'im bein' the skipper. The lady and gentleman felt the need of a bit o' land underfoot, for which I don't blame 'em. She ain't no proper sleepin' place, the *Anjar* ain't, seein' as she's likely to split 'er fat self open on that reef like a bloomin' humbrella, and tyke a dive. As good a chance as any that she'll do that, as float off at 'igh water. So we abandons ship, the gentleman—name o' Clawson—'irin' the lot of us, and buyin' the boat." He grinned and winked furtively to Markin, as if he had not only enjoyed the trip, but had been handsomely paid into the bargain.

In the meantime the passengers in the stern sheets were picking up and looking after small bits of baggage which had been stowed or covered with bits of canvas, while the sailors were hauling the boat inch by inch to a more secure position. The man in white—referred to by Pilkins as Mr. Clawson—tossed his sun-helmet ashore. He was a man past middle-age, with hair grayed about the ears and a trifle thin on top, as shown when he stooped to fumble in the litter under foot—suitcases, portmanteaus, a roll of steamer rugs wrapped in canvas, a Gladstone bag that bulged and revealed a hasty packing, a small black box-like satchel that suggested a surgeon's case and a clutter of odds and ends of clothing that had been plucked, apparently, from hooks in a stateroom and brought along at the last minute. There was even a small steamer trunk stowed under the after thwart.

ALTHOUGH a trifle sunburned about his lean jaws, Mr. Clawson had an unhealthy pallor—pale about the eyes, his ears very white, his gray eyes squinting and wrinkling against the sunlight, and his pale thin hands rather shaky. He wore a white silk shirt with soft collar attached, and his neck was long and thin, for the collar was not buttoned. He talked in a low tone with his wife, his many "my dears" as he spoke to her showing their relationship. He was polite and considerate, but there was a fretfulness about his tone, as if his nerves were shaken by the adventure of the storm and shipwreck and putting to sea in a cramped boat.

The conversation between Markin and Pilkins seemed to annoy Clawson, for of a sudden he straightened up, and in a querulous voice, demanded sharply—

"Is this a suitable place for ladies to stay?" He peered up through the palm grove at the veranda.

"Strickly modern and up-to-date 'otel, sir," said Markin briskly, stepping forward and touching his hat. "I'm the proprietor, and my missus she's at the 'ouse a-waitin' for to welcome your lady, sir." Mrs. Markin was visible now, standing on the veranda in a white dress.

Pilkins snorted in disgust.

"Now I rawther think you'll say I've been tellin' you the truth, sir, when I said as 'ow we'd find things a bit of all right at Kroon's Island."

"That's something to be thankful for," retorted Clawson, without troubling to specify whether he was thankful for truth or the promised comforts of the hotel. He evidently was out of patience with Pilkins.

"Now then, sir and madam," said Pilkins, turning to the boat, "we'll give a 'elpin' and you can come ashore, like it was the landin' stage in Liverpool. Proper lucky we be, too, to find a place where there ain't no cannibals a-waitin' of us with particular long spears, and a pot o' water on the fire to start the cookin'." Again he winked broadly at Markin, and twisted his face into a grimace of contempt for his passengers.

"Oh, stop your infernal gab!" exclaimed Clawson, as he helped his wife to get to her feet on the litter in the bottom of the boat.

"Just as you likes, sir," said Pilkins. "Them's the thanks I gits for bringin' you safe out of the dangers of the deep." He turned away again, declining to be of any assistance.

"This isn't such a bad place to be shipwrecked, dear, after all," said Mrs. Clawson, with a smile to Markin who stood at the bows to assist, the Malay sailors in the water standing by at the gunwales to steady the boat while the couple clambered over the gear to the bows, Clawson holding his wife's hand. She looked some ten years younger than her husband, though her healthier color may have been responsible for the disparity in their ages. She was short but slender, with shrewd laughing black eyes, round cheeks and her fluttered hair down about her ears under the sun-helmet, which she wore now at a rakish angle. There was that in her manner and attitude toward her husband which indicated a need for patience with him. She appeared to be no more concerned about the whole business than she might be by being caught in a shower at home.

She took Markin's hand to steady herself as she got her feet on the gunwale of the high bows.

"Mr. Clawson's health is not very good," she explained, as if it were desirable that the facts be given at once. "And he's been worried—the wreck was quite a shock to him. I hope he can have a good rest here—and some comfort."

She jumped to the dry sand.

"Good as a 'ospital, madam," said Markin with a bow. "You can walk straight up, if you like. Mrs. Markin—that's our name—she's got things ready. We'll look after the luggage."

"And my wife has been worried about me," said Clawson, with a genial grin at Markin. "I do need a rest—we're traveling for our health—mostly mine. I'm not ready for a hospital yet, but I don't care to wake up in the morning and find my bed adrift on a tropical sea." He turned back to oversee the unloading of the baggage, and in a minute was fretting about lack of care on the part of the Malays with the rug-roll, and he snatched the black box out of the hands of one of them as if fearful that it might be lost or injured in the hands of careless natives.

PILKINS stood watching, a short black clay pipe in his teeth and his lips lifted in a sort of sneering grin. He cut a ropy piece of black tobacco with great care for a fill for the pipe, his gray eyes wavering in an insolent fashion like a compass card that is unsteady on its liquid base. They were cruel eyes, with that peculiar hardness of the man who enjoys cruelty, and they had something of the unsteadiness of the heaving sea in them, as if he were watching a long, slow heave of a swell. At times he seemed to be cross-eyed.

His nose was misshapen and twisted a trifle to one side, suggesting the thought that at some time or other it had been battered with a club. His wrinkled face and neck had a griminess about them that was not uncleanness, and his face was perpetually lined with a chronic grin that hinted at a secret joke on the world. His blue visored cap was of good quality, and he wore it askew on his head. His powerful black arms, bare to the shoulders because he wore the usual sleeveless singlet, or shirt, were covered with hair and seared to that queer blue-blackness which tells of years under strong sunlight. Under the hair there were visible the blue lines of tattoo marks. His shirt, dank with perspiration from his labor at the oars, stuck to his shoulders and back like an outer skin that was about to peel in great wrinkled patches. His trousers were of a dark blue cloth of light weight, and the cut was such that they had the smartness that goes with a tailored uniform. They were obviously too small for him about the waist, as they had been slit at the sides and laced with hard cord. The bottoms were rolled up and the tops of his shoes covered his ankles. From a leather belt there dangled a sheath-knife with a hilt made from rounds of leather. In a word, Mr. Pilkins was a man thoroughly sure of himself—and it might be added that he certainly had an efficient look about him for any work that required brawn behind a pair of heavy fists.

"'Op along with the gentleman's luggage, you," said Pilkins grumblingly to one of the Malays who came out of the water with the rug-roll on his shoulder. "And be a bit smart about it, or I'll give ye a toe." It was apparent that Pilkins was not going to surrender his authority over the natives, command being natural to him.

Clawson jumped ashore, and moved gingerly in the soft sand, afraid to get his shoes full of it.

"Come on, dear, we might as well go along," and with a nod to Markin, Clawson walked after the Malay with the roll, already heading up for the hotel

Pilkins walked over to the boat and lounged up against the bow, scanning Markin with thoughtful and inquiring eyes. The boatswain scratched a match on the side of the boat, ducked his head into his hands, and threw out a smudge of white smoke.

The pair waited until the last Malay was off for the hotel with the last of the luggage before speaking. Markin had hung back to take the measure of Pilkins, and to pick up a bit of gossip.

Pilkins smoked with great gravity, his eyes now on the line of persons hotel-bound. He was in no hurry to speak, but there was a knowing look in his eyes.

"First-class passengers, eh, wot?" ventured Markin.

Pilkins nodded thoughtfully.

"A pair of toffs. I'd say the bloke's a bit of a banker, or such like, when 'e's at 'ome."

Markin pricked up his ears—and his eyebrows. He sucked a tooth thoughtfully, and turned his eyes on his new guests.

"Wot's that you said about buyin' the boat?" asked Markin.

"That's wot 'e done," said the boatswain. And again he winked a cryptic wink. "Me, I was a passenger myself. When the *Anjar* climbs the reef, nothin' would do yon chap but get clear of 'er. I pipes up as 'ow I knows a good place to go, if I 'ad a proper boat, and wot does the toff do but buy the boat, 'ire me and buy the natives out of the crew. Money no h'object." He winked again, slowly and with what he intended for a plain and open expression of his ideas to anybody with sense enough to grasp the meaning.

Markin gave a final and explosive suck at the tooth.

"You been 'ere afore? And you knows—about this 'otel o' mine?"

Pilkins nodded—and grinned.

"Yes, I knows. You're Markin, I take it—Nicholas Markin."

Markin's head darted forward like the head of a snapping-turtle. He was startled and somewhat abashed. He stared frankly into Pilkins' eyes, as if attempting to discover just how much this stranger did know.

"I say, I've seen you afore," said Markin. "Cawn't say just where—or when."

"A matter of eight year gone." Pilkins had the easy assurance of certainty.

"Wot place?"

"When we was in Liverpool." He spoke around the stem of his pipe, his lip lifting with each word and showing broken teeth.

"Oh, the Pool, eh!" But Markin was concealing his feelings by the exclamation. He was still on uncertain ground with Pilkins. "But eight years! That's a long time, as things goes with me. I knows your face, right enough, but I didn't place your name."

"Riccolo's boardin'-house—St. Paul's Square. Bosun, I was, P. and O., time o' seein' you. Mind the cut?" He thrust his chin upward, revealing a great white scar running along under his right jaw from near the ear.

Markin snapped his fingers in sudden and complete remembrance.

"Out o' the *Kandahar*, you was! I remembers! The beaks grabbed you for that fight in the 'allway at Riccolo's, when you 'ooked that oiler in the back with a knife!" Markin showed pleasure at the recognition—he felt safe again.

"Not me out o' the *Kandahar*," corrected Pilkins. "The oiler, 'e was the chap—and I gives it to 'im, right enough, but the lawr can't prove it, seein's the swine died. And when you mention the beaks—I mind that they tooken you on a charge o' nippin' a belt with money from a bloke who was drunk in—"

"Only as a witness, mind," broke in Markin hastily. "And it's no good to rake up old scores, Pilkins."

"No need, right you are," agreed Pilkins. He puffed contentedly, now that they understood each other, and cast a sagacious eye through the smoke upon Markin, grinning that grin of insolent assurance.

"You 'ad a dry trip, I'd say that," remarked the hotel keeper, glancing into the boat.

"You're Markin—I'm Pilkins. That's good enough for us, eh, wot, matey?" asked Pilkins, refusing to change the subject of their conversation.

Markin turned to him in mild surprize.

"Why, yes," he admitted. "But wot's the good of it?"

"Wot's the good o' wot?"

"I means all this draggin' up old things—Liverpool, and such."

"No offense, matey, no offense," soothed Pilkins. "I speaks of them times just to say a word as 'ow things stands betweenst us."

"Well, wot about it?" demanded Markin, feeling that it was time to stop Pilkins or bring him into the open; after all, Markin had a position to maintain as the hotel man of Kroon's Island.

PILKINS shrugged his shoulder and patted his ribs, finding that his shirt was drying.

"We trusts one another, that's wot about it," he declared. "We're old chums, eh, Nick?"

Markin nodded, with pronounced indifference.

"Oh, yes. I ain't the kind to drop old pals."

Pilkins jerked a thumb in the direction of the hotel.

"I brings the pair 'ere because I knowed you'd be 'ere."

"I'll make that right with ye," said Markin frankly. "It's a good bit o' business to throw my way. The toff can pay 'is way, I'd say."

Pilkins chuckled softly, and made a clucking sound to finish off the chuckle.

"The lady 'as a nice collection o' trinkets and such like."

Markin blinked. This was the news he wanted, but he saw that Pilkins had a few ideas of his own.

"I run a respectable place 'ere, Pilkins," he declared, a trifle loftily.

"Oh, quite so, quite so," sneered Pilkins. "I brings a toff with a roll of notes you couldn't stuff into a pair of boots, and 'is wife with jewels thick as this sand, and I knows Nick Markin is the chap for me—and when I gets 'ere, I finds Markin 'as turned respectable! I knows of officers of the lawr who'd be interested to know as much!"

Markin looked about helplessly. This was more than he had expected out of the boat. "You mean you want to rob this toff in my 'otel, and leave me to explain when 'e makes a row to the gover'ment?"

Pilkins sniffed disgustedly.

"This party 'as been shipwrecked," he announced in the manner of a schoolmaster who must be patient with a stupid pupil. "Ain't the *Anjar* piled up, and didn't the toff quit 'er in a boat, at 'is own risk? Who's to know—or awsk—wot becomes of 'em? Tell me that?"

"You mean—to do 'em in?" gasped Markin.

"Who said anythink about doin' 'em in?"

"But wot's to become of 'em when we've got the swag?"

Pilkins stared up and down the beach as if seeking sight of something he missed.

"I don't know where to put 'em," he said tartly. "You knows best. Maybe they falls in the water while they're takin' a bit of a bawth in the sea. There's sharks about 'ere, I'd say. Or the natives—more'n one native 'as 'acked the 'ead off'n a gentleman walkin' about of a morning takin' the air, wot? I've told this party the natives was dangerous," he went on, his voice taking a virtuous tone. "So, I ain't under no contrack to guarantee the 'ealth of the toff. I ain't no nursin' home. I warns 'em, that's wot I does, afore they leaves the *Anjar*, but they would come sailin' about, sayin' as 'ow they prefers to take chances with the dangers of land rather than to face a watery grave. So I says to you, Nick, if a h'elephant should step on this chap, 'e also might lose 'is cash and jewelry, eh? And who's to know wot 'e lost?" He winked, once more settling the troubles of the moment with his grimace.

Markin drew elaborate patterns of lines and curves with the toe of his shoe in the sand.

"My missus would be the death o' me if she knew I was in on anythink of the sort," he confided, and seemed sad about it. "But 'ow can you be sure the toff's got so much swag?" Though he had a fear of his wife, he indicated that he might take risks if there was surety of suitable reward.

"Look 'ere, Nick, I knows wot I'm about," asserted Pilkins with new hope. "I don't go and leave the *Anjar* just for the fun of sailin' about, and when I lays a course for your place, I 'as something rich in mind. Now, you ain't goin' to bilge out on me, Nick?" He was confidential and ingratiating.

"I don't know as I've bilged out on anybody yet," said Markin, with a wary and worried look toward the veranda. "But killin'—I've no fancy for that, at least 'ereabouts I ain't."

"I could 'ave landed the lot in the jungle and slit the throats of 'em," went on Pilkins in a hurt tone. "But I brings 'em to you, Nick, and that means a blinkin' forchin. You ought to git down on your marrer-bones, that's wot I says, and beg my pardon. A blinkin' forchin—and you turns up your crimson nose at me—and it!" Now he was openly indignant.

"'Ow much to be 'ad out of the toff and his missus?" asked Markin. He felt it would be the more discreet thing to begin to show a decent interest in the matter.

"I'd say a trifle of from five to ten thousand quid—and a lot of that in notes. Easy to carry, easy to 'ide, easy to spend."

"Twenty-five to fifty thousand dollars!" gasped Markin. His tone and look expressed doubt, but a look of greed snapped into his eyes. Such sums were uncommon at Kroon's Island, and he had visions of more civilized places and the luxury which his soul craved.

"All of that, and a bit more, I'd say," Pilkins assured him. "I've seen the toff's missus with all of that 'angin' from 'er neck as she sits at dinner in the saloon—di'monds on 'er big as your thumb. This pair are towerists—trippers. They left a liner in Singapore—bloomin' round-the-worlder. I know—I was bosun's mate in 'er."

"But you're out of the *Anjar*."

"Out of the *Anjar!*" scorned Pilkins. "Sure enough I'm out of the *Anjar*. Wot a smart lad you be, Nick! Thinks I comes in a blinkin' caravan?"

"But the tripper-boat?" insisted the incredulous Markin. "'Ow comes it that you're out of the—?"

"I been tellin' you I was a blasted passenger in the *Anjar*, but you can't get it through your 'ead! I follers this pair out of the tripper-boat—*Samarkand,* she is, forty-thousand tonner full of rich blokes from America. Bosun's mate I was in 'er, and I 'as my eye on this pair, and when they decides to stay 'ereabouts for a couple of months afore they goes 'ome, that's my chance. The toff's wife she wants to see a bit o' romance—that's wot she says—and the toff himself wants to 'ave a bit of a rest and a change. I gets it from a friend o' mine in the steward's side. So when this Clawson toff draws 'is cash from the purser and leaves the *Samarkand* with a wad the bigness of your leg in big sizes of money I gives the tripper-boat a jump and goes passenger in the *Anjar.* And look wot 'appens."

"But ain't they suspicious of you—comin' from the *Samarkand* like on their heels?"

"They didn't see me in the *Samarkand.* Not a suspish. And do you think I'm minded to let such game slip away? No, I stays along, till the *Anjar* goes pantomimin' on a reef, and fetches 'em 'ere to you. I tells 'im I knows of a 'otel, bein' yours, and 'ere we are shipshape and Bristol fashion. I'm the blinkin' spider and 'e's the fly, with a jolly fat pile for the pair of us, if you plays the game, Nick."

"Wot good would jewels do me?" asked Markin. "You can trot away with 'em. But me—I've got to 'ave cash."

Pilkins considered a moment.

"You can 'ave the cash, or the bulk of it. I'll want to keep enough to make Sydney, and the jewelry suits me. Just you give me a chance, and I'll 'ave the toff's lot and the di'monds and so on. The cash is in the black box old Clawson carries about with 'im. Simple and easy—and no danger to you."

"Wotever's done, we'll 'ave to keep the wife out of the know," said Markin. "She's fair murderin', when she's crossed."

"Then it's a go, matey," declared Pilkins with satisfaction. "Now you bear a 'and with this boat, and we'll put 'er ashore up the beach. We've got to 'ave some good excuse for stoppin' back like this for a private talk, and lookin' after the boat's as good an excuse as any. 'Eave ho, Matey!"

They put the boat into the water, rowed her to the boat beach, and hauled her ashore with care.

III

"NICK, you've got to fix that brass lamp for the folks who are in the room upstairs—hustle along, now."

It was Mrs. Markin who called from the veranda. Her husband was engaged in a game of cribbage with Pilkins down in the palm grove, where there was a table for persons who wished to remain out of doors under a roof of thatch propped up on poles.

And as Mrs. Markin closed her request for Markin's immediate presence, she also waved her hand in a manner that was understood by him to mean that there was something highly important, and of a private nature, which she wished to discuss with him. Their code of signals had been of value to them more than once in the handling of special cases which they wished to keep from the knowledge of others.

So as Markin turned his head from his cards, intending to tell her to fix the lamp herself, he checked himself, and made a face at Pilkins.

"There's the missus at me," he grumbled. "If I don't give her a stir, she'll give me no peace. Back in a jiff," and he rose and departed, leaving Pilkins to smoke his pipe and think in the meantime.

As he reached the *kajang,* which opened to her private quarters, Markin saw his wife inside. She held up a warning finger for caution. By this time the guests were in an upper room at the other end of the veranda, and well out of ear-shot. It was now late in the afternoon, and sounds from the cook-house in the rear told of preparations for dinner by the Chinese cooks.

"Send Quong Hing away from here on a job that'll keep him away half an hour."

The old Chinese was pottering about on the veranda, wiping off chairs and scrubbing the flooring. Markin sent him on an errand.

"Wot's up, love?" asked Markin, as he slid in behind the *kajang.*

"You big dumb-bell!" she whispered at him, "that Pilkins is playin' you for a fool!"

"'Ow do you mean?" he gasped.

She did not reply, but took him by the arm and led him to her sewing table in the back of the room. Here she pointed to a creased copy of a Singapore newspaper which had been straightened out after having been tightly folded.

Markin stared back at his wife, after looking at the paper.

"Wot about it?" he asked, a puzzled frown on his forehead. "That's nothing to fetch me away from my game with a signal."

"Read it!" she whispered. "And keep your mouth shut! This Pilkins bird may think he can pull the wool over your eyes, but he can't boo me! Read *that!*" and she put her finger on a top part of a page where black headlines rose up from the finer print. This is what Markin read:

THIEVES ABOARD S. S. *SAMARKAND*

Cabin thieves aboard the round-the-world steamer *Samarkand*, which arrived this morning, have robbed passengers of cash and jewelry amounting to several thousand dollars, according to information given to the local police.

The wholesale robbery, or rather robberies, took place the night before the vessel arrived here. The thefts were not discovered until many of the passengers had come ashore for the stop-over of two days. Therefore it will be most difficult to find the thieves because the valuables stolen were probably taken ashore almost at once after the arrival of the steamer.

More than three hundred passengers have already reported thefts, and many more already ashore have probably lost valuables. In preparation for coming ashore, many of the passengers took their valuables from the purser's safe the night before, including jewels as well as cash. The thieves stole from many staterooms during the night, and probably up to daylight, when the vessel anchored in the roadstead.

It is possible that some of the stewards worked with the thieves, for staterooms must have been unlocked, and then locked again. The purser of the vessel says this can not be true, as no stewards attempted to get ashore, and it is doubted that any of the stewards' department had a hand in the thefts, though that remains to be seen.

Stewards looking after the boots have stated that there were passengers moving about during the night and early morning. A man in a bathrobe was seen, trying doors; he excused himself on the grounds that he had made a mistake in the number of his cabin. That happened in several passages, as various stewards of that watch made the same reports when questioned. Also, a woman was observed just before daylight at various deck doors, looking out, as if waiting for a sight of land. She also was in a bathrobe, but always moved away when approached. Both man and woman wore bathrobes provided by the steamer, and wore towels about their heads; so that it was impossible to identify the persons, as might have been done had they worn their own bathrobes of distinctive color. Both these persons avoided close scrutiny by the stewards, who thought little of the thing at the time, but when all stewards had the same reports for various decks and sections of decks, the police are sure that these mysterious persons were the thieves. It is presumed that the woman kept watch for the man who was working.

The promptness of two passengers in reporting their losses brought about the early discovery of the wholesale thefts. Mr. and Mrs. Clawson, American passengers, made the first report to the police this morning about nine o'clock. Mr. Clawson is an Illinois banker traveling for his health. They lost watches, a considerable sum of money, a pearl necklace and some documents which the thief evidently mistook for negotiable paper.

Fortunately, Mr. Clawson did not lose his travelers' cheques, otherwise he might have been put to the annoyance of cabling his bank for additional funds. He had made plans to leave the steamer here, and was booked to sail in the *Anjar* at noon. While Mr. and Mrs. Clawson were telling their story of the thefts to the police, the assistant purser arrived from the *Samarkand* with reports of other thefts. We hope in a later edition to give further particulars. The merchants of Singapore will undoubtedly suffer from these thefts, as passengers from these liners generally spend considerable money while here staying at hotels during the stopover.

"Strike me pink!" gasped Markin under his breath as he turned in amazement to his wife. "This is rotten luck for us!"

"How do you mean it's rotten?" demanded his wife, standing with her hands on hips, and gazing at him with an air of great satisfaction.

"They're almost stripped of money."

Mrs. Markin chortled gayly.

"Nick, you're a moss-agate fool! Don't the paper say they've got plenty of money?"

Markin scratched his head. He did not want to tell his wife what he had heard from Pilkins, and this story did not seem to gibe with the reports of great wealth given by the boatswain.

"But they was robbed of jewels and cash, and while they've got plenty for steamers, perhaps they're short." His ideas of fat loot were gone glimmering, and he had not adjusted his mind to that fact.

"Nick, there's something wrong about these people."

"What you mean?"

"This Pilkins comin' along with 'em."

He blinked again. So far Pilkins appeared to be just what he was, and Markin had not gone any deeper into any other possibility.

" 'Ow'd you come by this paper, Daisy?"

"It dropped out of that rug-roll the Clawsons had, and I snitched it, wantin' somethin' to read, and thinkin' they wouldn't mind."

"Then Pilkins 'asn't read it?"

"How do I know what Pilkins has read?"

"But you said there was somethin' wrong about Pilkins comin' along with 'em—and wot's wrong about that, I awsks?"

"There's a blind-your-eye goin' on. And

I'd say, from the way you and Pilkins have been nose to nose since he came this mornin', that he's playin' you for a sucker, and—"

Markin muttered and held up a hand in denial.

"Shut up! I know you, Nick Markin! This Pilkins is sweetenin' you for somethin' shady—I know the signs!"

"I'm no fool, Daisy," he said resentfully and cautiously. "Pilkins can't fool me, but he brought this business to us, and I've got to do him fair on the drinks."

"You lie!" she charged calmly. "He's up to somethin' and he's fixin' you either to help or he's playin' you for a boob. He's an old pal of yours! Now ain't that right?"

MARKIN made a grimace of chagrin. He saw that his wife knew too much to make denial worth while, but what he did want to know was how much information she possessed.

"All right, Daisy," he admitted. "I knowed him afore, right enough. But that's nothink to raise a row about, is it? Good thing I knowed him—that's why he comes for this place with these folks. Don't we need money?"

"We need a lot, Nick. I'm sick of the place. I've sunk all I had in the place, and I'd sell out tomorrow for half of what I paid."

"Fat chance you've got to sell, Daisy. Is it these folks you're thinkin' of sellin' to? If so, you've gone balmy," and he looked at her as if he suspected that she was losing her reason.

She leaned close to him and whispered: "These people are rich, Nick—richer'n you think."

Again he stared at her in amazement. "But you just said they was robbed in the *Samarkand*—the paper says so."

"Robbed, yes. But they didn't lose as much as you—or the police think."

Now Markin detected a queer look in his wife's eyes, and a flush of excitement in her cheeks. He had never seen her so wrought up before. He wondered if she was suffering from a touch of sun.

"Wot's the police got to do with it, Daisy?"

She seized him by the shoulders with impatient hands and peered into his eyes, her lips trembling.

"I'm no fool, if you be, Nick! When I snitched that paper, why did Clawson go after his wife because she had lost it? I hears him say to her, 'We don't want this crowd to read that paper.' "

Markin's eyes glowed with a glimmering of understanding.

"Wot did she say back to 'im?" he asked eagerly.

"She tells him it won't do no harm if we read it, and then he hushes her up proper, and they goes on whisperin', not knowin' I was on the outside stairs where I could hear through the *kajang*."

"Strike me blind!" he gasped. "You got it, Daisy! These are the people who done the stealin' on the *Samarkand*!"

She grinned at him.

"You big dub of a darling, Nick! And the paper says several thousand dollars! That's why he's so careful of that rug-roll, and the black box he carries about with him."

Markin sucked his breath in a sharp hiss.

"And all that blinkin' loot upstairs!" he gasped.

"What's more," she went on, "this Pilkins pal of yours knows they've got it, I'll bet. Play fair, now, Nick—what's Pilkins up to?" She gave him a look of suspicion, as if she really knew that he was withholding information from her.

"Daisy, you beat me," he confessed, somewhat pridefully and with a sheepish grin. "No use keepin' a thing hid from you—which I don't."

"He's told you these folks are fat with money."

"Yus—'e 'as. But not a word of wot you've just told me. He says to me they got plenty of money and jewelry—but he says only twenty or thirty thousand, as I remembers."

"Oh-ho, he did, did he! What a smart chap our Mr. Pilkins is! And what else did he say?"

"Says as 'ow he's follered 'em out of the *Samarkand*—'e was in the crew, and a steward tipped 'im these folks had wealth. So 'e comes along with 'em. That's all 'e says, Daisy."

She laughed quietly.

"And he wants to dip his fingers, with your help, into the loot, eh?"

"'Ow do you know that, Daisy?" He was perturbed now, and on shaky ground. He wondered how he would ever be able to fool his wife in anything if she knew everything about this matter which he had been most careful to keep from her.

"Don't ask silly questions. What else would he be tellin' you they're rich for? That means he wants your help. But you know what's the real low-down, Nick?"

"No, I don't," he confessed.

She bent over and whispered into his ear—

"Pilkins is in with 'em!"

"Wot's that?" He was alarmed now, for he realized that Pilkins really was misleading him if what his wife said was true.

"It's plain enough to me. Here's three people out of the *Samarkand*. The passengers were robbed. The Clawsons don't want us to read about it in the paper, and Pilkins is the man who knew where to bring 'em to hide away. So Pilkins blinds your eye with a yarn that they're rich and ought to be robbed. The three of 'em are in together, I tell you."

"But Daisy! The Clawsons was the people who told the police straight off in S'pore about bein' robbed. Not likely they'd do that if—"

"More blind-your-eye," declared his wife. "They threw the police off the track that way, and they had it all planned to leave the steamer. And I'll bet you that Pilkins helped 'em to swipe the stuff, and then told 'em where to go and hide with him. So they all quit the *Samarkand* together. Maybe he does want to rob 'em now, but he knows about the *Samarkand* stealin', you can bet on that—and he didn't tell you about it! No! Your bride had to give you that little tip!"

Markin was now astounded. He clutched at his nose and gave it a pull, and looked about him in a puzzled way. Then he sat down, with feet sprawled before him, and sucked his teeth noisily while he tried to turn over in his mind all the things that Pilkins had told him.

"That swine!" breathed Markin. "And he tries to play me into his net, like I was a blinkin' softy. Strike me pink, Daisy, but you've got it! Pilkins knows all the time they've got the loot from the *Samarkand*, and 'e talks it down small, so I'll only want a small share! And wot they've got is a blinkin' forchin!"

"Pull yourself together, you fool!" she whispered fiercely. "You can't sit there and blow at the air."

"Wot'll I do, Daisy?"

"String him along. Don't let him know we've got the straight tip on the Clawsons. We've got to work this thing so your Mr. Pilkins gits no finger in this little pie."

He turned to her with a hopeful look. "You mean, Daisy, that we'll—"

"You know what I mean. Think I'm goin' to spend the rest of my life in this hole, gittin' poorer every day—and older? Not me, Nick! I ain't built that way. The Clawsons may be awful smart aboard the *Samarkand*, but we may show 'em a thing or two before we're done—as well as Pilkins."

Now Markin understood that his wife would back him up in anything, and that she was already allied with him in getting the loot from the *Samarkand*. He jumped up from his chair and threw his arms about her neck.

"Daisy, my jewel!" he murmured. "We're rich!"

"Go back to Pilkins. He may git suspicious. Give him plenty to drink, pretend you're keepin' me in the dark. Plan with him, but play him smart. Just leave things to me until I've studied things out, and mind you keep off the drink yourself. You'll need all the wits you've got."

He nodded, his eyes moist and his face reddened with the joy that he could get the fingers on the Clawsons' wealth with the approval of his wife. It was like old times—and there was every promise that once more they would be back in civilization with everything they needed.

SO MARKIN started for the bar to carry to Pilkins a bottle which would put the bosun in good humor.

"Strikes me odd," grumbled Pilkins as Markin returned, "that your old woman can't let you 'ave a game with me, without givin' you the call. Wot's the comfort in that sort of thing, I awsks?"

"You let me 'andle 'er, old chum," soothed Markin as he resumed his seat and slapped the bottle on the table. "These drinks is on the 'ouse, so don't get shirty. I got to keep the missus in a good temper if we're to do anythink together on this job in 'and."

Pilkins sucked his pipe and contemplated his cards with a grumpy stare while Markin filled the glasses.

"When're we goin' to do anythink on this job, eh?" asked Pilkins, mildly and thoughtfully.

"Wot's the rush?" countered Markin. "Ain't we got to know wot we're doin' of afore we starts?"

"The first blinkin' thing you know, some schooner'll be droppin' in 'ere, and the whole thing's gone to jug."

"I don't see 'ow a schooner's goin' to stop us."

Pilkins picked up his glass and threw back his head, to dash the liquor into his throat. He shuddered slightly, and put the glass on the table.

"They'll 'op out on us," explaimed Pilkins. "This pair won't stop along 'ere if there's a chance to be on the wing. And if we waits too long, Nick, they'll be after me to run up the sail of the boat, and take 'em along down the coast where they can pick up a steamer. And pop! there goes your blinkin' forchin. I've no mind to 'ustle you along matey—I'll 'ave a run at the swag by myself, if I 'aves to take it myself."

"I ain't 'eard no plan from you yet," objected Markin. "So 'ow can I say what I'll do. This 'otel don't belong to me, and if anythink goes wrong, the wife'll pitch me out to the constables. Wot do you want to do on the job?"

"Do?" demanded Pilkins with an angry grimace. "I'll tell you what we'll do." He leaned forward over the table, and spoke with careful deliberation, his eyes on Markin's. "Knife the pair of 'em, grab the swag, and burn the 'otel."

Markin's jaw dropped in something akin to terror.

"Knife the two of 'em?" he gasped, and looked around to make sure no one was within ear-shot in the palm grove.

"Simple, ain't it? Your share'll be far more'n the 'otel's worth—and you're not out anythink."

"But my old woman!"

"What can your old woman do? Nothink, exactly, that's what! She 'as you by the ears most of the time, far's I can see. She'll not know what's 'appened, the two of 'em'll be burned up, you've got your swag and can take the big jump, and who's to find fault with that?"

Markin gravely studied his cards—or pretended to. He wanted Pilkins to believe that the plan was receiving careful thought, and that there would be no opposition to it.

"Well, what do ye say?" demanded Pilkins truculently. His attitude now was that he was much concerned whether Markin was willing to go in on the job or not. And the bosun reached for the bottle and hurled another drink into his throat.

Markin took a drink himself before he replied.

"It ought to work," he conceded. "But you'll 'ave to 'andle the knife."

Pilkins shrugged a scornful shoulder and hitched at his belt.

"I'll settle that part of the business myself," he agreed. "I'm in that room on the ground floor, and it's near to the outside stairway that leads to the top veranda. They're in the first room, and I can do the job proper and easy. And I'll finish 'em off tonight—late."

"But tonight," objected Markin. "That's no time to jump at things—so quick like, and no thinkin' it over."

"Blast the thinkin'!" whispered Pilkins across the table. "I've done the thinkin', and I'm for gittin' on! What's the odds?"

"I'd say we've got time enough. We can do the job, yus. But 'ow about gittin' away from 'ere safe enough afterward? That's wot I wants to think out."

"No good waitin'," pressed Pilkins. "Maybe there'll be more boats comin' in from the *Anjar*, though myself, I'd say she'll be off the reef by this time and on 'er way. And I've brought this forchin 'ere, and I'll 'ave no crimson nonsense about it. We can't take chances—anythink's likely to 'appen to bilge the business. And if this Clawson chap gits it into 'is 'ead to be out of 'ere in the boat, there'll be no stoppin' 'im short o' the knife. And if he says 'e wants to go, I'll take 'im—and you can sit 'ere and toast your toes."

Markin squirmed in his chair. He knew Pilkins was boiling with suppressed fury—or, perhaps, was already afraid that Mrs. Markin by some mysterious method had acquired knowledge of the plan and had warned her husband.

"Now look 'ere, I'm the boss o' this job o' work," declared Markin with a sudden show of spirit. "I does a thing when I feels the time is right, and not before. You chuck this talk till I've 'ad time to work it out in my mind."

Pilkins, from being openly furious, now looked hurt. He stared at Markin in surprize.

"You goin' to let a pal down after 'e's brought this job to your 'ouse?"

"It runs my way," retorted Markin sharply. "I'm in on it, but not tonight. That's too sudden-like, as I've said. Now go on with the game—and chuck this talk. It's dangerous."

"Oh, all right, all right," agreed Pilkins aimiably enough. "But you mark my words, matey—this pair'll give us the slip while you're fixin' things in your mind. I'll chuck the game 'ere and now, that's what, and take a bit of air down the beach. Maybe we've been talkin' too much as it is. But no fear, matey—when you're ready, we'll finish off the job as it should be done." He stood up, winked and grinned at Markin, lighted his pipe, and strode away for the beach, leaving white puffs of smoke lingering in the still air behind him.

IV

"THERE'S only one thing to do," began Mrs. Markin as her husband returned from the palm grove, "and that's to warn the Clawsons against Pilkins."

"My aunt's black cat, Daisy! Warn the Clawsons—if we do that, 'ow can we pinch the swag for ourselfs?" He gasped the words out in a hoarse whisper while he polished the glasses at the bar, and his wife hung over it, her eyes snapping with the excitement of her own plans.

"You fool, Nick! If they're robbed in our house, we've got to have somebody to hang the job on, ain't we?"

Markin looked worried. He distrusted this new idea of his wife, for it looked to him as if she intended to back out on what she had suggested herself—robbing the Clawsons. He feared that she was leading him into a trap, and that her real object was to block him and Pilkins in their plot.

"It ain't safe, tellin' the Clawsons," he objected. "It'll make 'em careful—and they'll keep close watch on things."

"That's just the way to get their confidence. If we warn 'em against Pilkins, they won't be on the watch against us, will they? And that opens the road for you to do the job when you're ready. And when they miss their loot, it leaves Pilkins holdin' the sack."

Markin's face changed from suspicion to open admiration as he grasped the plan fully. He threw his hand out swiftly and snapped his fingers.

"That's the ticket!" he agreed.

"Come along with me," said Mrs. Markin. "Now's the time to do it, while this Pilkins is wandering around on the beach."

She led the way to the staircase, which ran up from the general room in which was the bar, and Markin followed. At the top Mrs. Markin rapped at the door, which opened directly into the room occupied by the Clawsons.

There was no reply for a couple of moments, but there were movements, and the rustling of papers, as if the guests were hastily putting away something which they wished concealed. Then, after a moment of whispering, Mrs. Clawson's voice called out—

"Come in!"

Mrs. Markin opened the door and strode in. The sun was well down by this time, and the closed *kajangs*—except for a couple of feet to let in the air over the sills—made the room fairly dark,

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Mrs. Clawson as she came forward. "I thought it was the native servant coming with fresh water."

"We've come on a private matter," began Mrs. Markin.

Mr. Clawson, who apparently had been napping in a cane reclining chair, woke up suddenly and rubbed his eyes. But the action did not fool Mrs. Markin—she knew there had been whispering when she knocked on the door.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Clawson, startled at seeing two figures in the room, for Mrs. Markin and her husband had closed the door behind them, and they were in the darkest part of the room. "Oh, yes," he added, when he recognized Mrs. Markin, and stood to his feet. His collar was off, and his shirt open at the neck, and he hastily snapped the collar-button into place and slipped on a seersucker jacket.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Mrs. Clawson, as her husband went to the dresser and put on his collar. They were both a trifle upset and perturbed at this unexpected visit from the landlord and landlady.

"No, thanks," said Mrs. Markin. "My husband and me, we thought we ought to put you on your guard—that is, we don't want to alarm you none, but we come to the conclusion we better be on the safe side."

Mr. Clawson returned from the dresser, keenly alert at once, and a trifle worried. He looked behind him, and Mrs. Markin saw that his glance was directed at the rug-roll, which had been opened, and hastily strapped together again, as shown by the fact that the ends of the straps were not tucked in. His backward glance seemed to indicate that he wished the roll had been put out of sight, or he feared that there might be some incriminating object left out in sight.

"I don't understand just what you mean," said the startled Mrs. Clawson. Her voice wavered slightly, and she gave her husband a quick look.

"Well, it's kind of a delicate subject with us. We don't want to butt into your affairs, but we run a respectable house, and I've talked the thing over with my husband here, and we thought you might just as well know what's goin' on—or what we think's goin' on."

Markin pushed forward and stood beside his wife, having great difficulty in not letting his eyes stray to the rug-roll and the other pieces of baggage about the room.

"You'd better sit down," suggested Clawson. He looked pale and tired, and now the perspiration came out on his forehead. He seemed annoyed, and his coolness, to Mrs. Markin's mind, was a bit forced.

"Thanks," and she dropped into the reclining clair which he waved a hand to. Markin moved a smaller chair alongside, and sat down himself, his face twisting as he ran his tongue over his teeth in a thoughtful manner.

"Now what's troubling you?" asked Mr. Clawson.

"As I said before," resumed Mrs. Markin, "we don't want to horn into your business. But as you're stayin' in our house, we got to make sure—well, I might say, we've got to see that you're protected."

"Protected!" exclaimed Mrs. Clawson. "I don't understand."

"We better not talk too loud," warned Mrs. Markin, with a turn of her head to see out between the wall and the edge of the nearest *kajang*. "It's this man Pilkins we want to talk about—and he's down on the beach and may come back any minute and hear us."

Mrs. Clawson exchanged glances with her husband, and lifted a hand in a sort of caution.

"My dear! I said, George—"

"That's all right, my dear," her husband broke in quietly, "I'll wait until we've got something we can depend upon. Now, Mrs. Markin, what have you seen or heard that makes you think there's anything wrong with Pilkins?"

"I'd like to ask you a question first, just to fix things in my mind," replied Mrs. Markin. Clawson nodded, and she went on, "I don't want to make no mistakes about this, you know."

"And we don't want you to make any mistake, certainly," said Clawson. "Just a moment, please." He stepped to the dresser and took from an open upper drawer a revolver which he put into a back pocket. Markin's eyes followed his movements closely, but with an attempt to be indifferent.

"We wants to make sure," broke in Markin, "that what Pilkins 'as told me is all correct."

"I see," said Clawson, with a nod, resuming his chair beside his wife. "Well, so far as we can be sure, we saw Mr. Pilkins first aboard the *Anjar*."

"You folks come from the steamer *Samarkand*," said Mrs. Markin bluntly.

Again the Clawsons exchanged surprized glances.

"Who told you that?" demanded Clawson. "Not that it matters, but I'd like to know who told you we came from the *Samarkand*."

"The stickers on your luggage, sir," said Markin, seeing a chance to glance at the rug-roll.

"Oh, never mind the stickers," said Clawson irritably. "If we've got the *Samarkand* stickers on our luggage, that proves that we haven't made any secret of the *Samarkand*. Now, you didn't come here to talk about stickers?"

"You shut up, Nick," said Mrs. Markin. "No, sir, it ain't that we come about. Don't mind my husband, he's a bit upset. It's because of something Mr. Pilkins said—and he told us you come from the *Samarkand*."

"And what if he did?" demanded Clawson.

"Pilkins come from the *Samarkand* himself—and you think he's from the *Anjar*, as a passenger. Ain't that right, sir?"

"It is, yes," said Clawson, disregarding his wife's gasp of astonishment.

"And he was in the crew of the *Samarkand*, that's where this Pilkins was."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Mrs. Clawson. "I told you I'd seen him aboard the *Samarkand*, George, and you wouldn't believe me!"

MRS. MARKIN decided that she was not going to be taken in by this bit of acting on the part of Mrs. Clawson. She still was of the opinion that the Clawsons and Pilkins were in a game together, and that the Clawsons were playing her to learn just what she knew about the thefts of the tourist steamer.

"That's all right, dear, I didn't want you worried," said Clawson soothingly. And to Mrs. Markin: "I suspected that Pilkins was from the *Samarkand*, but I didn't see anything to worry about. My wife was sure he was from the crew of the big steamer after we left the *Anjar*. Now you seem to be worried also over the fact that Pilkins was in the *Samarkand*. Just why should you be worried?"

"There ain't no special reason to be worried, far as I'm concerned, no," admitted Mrs. Markin. "Sailors jump all over the shop. But when Pilkins begins to tell my husband that you're rich folks, and that he quit the *Samarkand* because you did, and followed you to the *Anjar*, as a passenger, it begins to look funny to us. Don't you think so, sir?"

"It certainly is something to report to us, yes, indeed!" conceded Clawson warmly, at the same time disregarding his wife's amazed exclamations. "And we appreciate it."

Mrs. Markin stood up, and Markin followed suit.

"If you don't care about Pilkins followin' you about, we don't," said Mrs. Markin. "All I can say is that we've given you fair warnin', and if you don't keep your valuables in our safe, we can't be responsible if you lose anything. It looks to us as if this Pilkins has stuck with you from the *Samarkand* 'cause he intends to rob you. And as there ain't no police in this place, we can't do anything but warn you. We're a respectable couple and we keep a respectable house, and if you're robbed, you brought the robber along with you. Our duty is done when we've told you what we know." She turned to the door, as if she had said all she intended to say, and was a trifle hurt at their attitude.

"Just a minute, please," said Clawson, standing up and following Mrs. Markin. "You've told us this thing—now we know what it's all about. But I'd like to go into detail a trifle more."

"All right," said Mrs. Markin, and returned to her chair. Markin went to the *kajang* and peered out, to make sure that Pilkins was still safely on the beach. He nodded that he could see the boatswain up near the boat beach, and stood behind his wife's chair.

"Did Pilkins tell you he had followed us in order to rob us?" Clawson asked Markin.

"No, sir, 'e didn't give that reason. 'E didn't give me reason whatsoever, sir."

"But he must have some reason for taking you into his confidence—in telling you that we were rich, and that he had known it in the *Samarkand*"

" 'E was a little odd about it, yes, sir," admitted Markin, scratching his head as an aid to memory. "But 'e didn't come right out with 'is meanin's, no, sir."

"Now look here, Mr. Markin," said Clawson firmly. "You're no fool, and you must know what he was driving at, otherwise when you told your wife what you'd heard, you two wouldn't have so kindly come and warned us—for which we are grateful. But what I'm trying to get at, is what particular basis you have for feeling that Pilkins is dangerous?"

" 'E just 'inted," said Markin.

"Hinted at robbery? Is that it? Your wife has said as much, but I want the facts as straight as I can get them."

Markin shuffled his feet. He was ill at ease. He had not looked for such a close cross-examination. "Wot 'e said was just that you was a pair of toffs—swells—and 'ad plenty of cash, and all that."

"Did he say he'd come from the *Samarkand*, and had brought us here to rob us, and wanted your help?"

Markin showed his alarm.

"No, 'e didn't say that, no, sir—not right out flat, no, sir."

"But if he was hinting at such things, and talking about how rich we were, he must have had you in mind as a man to help him in robbery, otherwise he would not have told you what he did?"

"I wouldn't 'elp nobody to do no robbin', sir," objected Markin, aglow with virtue.

"Of course you wouldn't. If you were that kind of a man—or your wife would countenance such an idea—you wouldn't be here warning us."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Markin.

"But on what did Pilkins base his statement that we were rich? Just what did he say, briefly, and in his own language as best you can remember, about his knowledge that we were rich—and how rich does he think we are?"

Markin looked the ceiling over with great care, and sucked his teeth reflectively.

"Go on and tell Mr. Clawson," encouraged Mrs. Markin.

"'E figures as 'ow you've got ten to twenty thousand dollars on you," began Markin, cautiously. "And 'e says to me, 'Mr. Markin, that's a lot of money in one chunk, when the jewelry is figgered in—and no police 'ereabouts. And you run this hotel, and if somethin' was to 'appen to these people, who's to know 'ow much money they 'ad.' That ain't speakin' right out, sir, you might say, no, sir, but I drawrs my own idears from 'is words. And when I tells it to the missus 'ere, she says as 'ow we've got to warn you straight off, which we done. Now, sir, you brought Mr. Pilkins 'ere, and we don't want no trouble—not with Pilkins, you mind. So you know as much as we do, and don't take no chawnces, sir, and wot's more, don't git us in no trouble. Wot we've said is private, and you ought to protect us just like we're tryin' to protect you. Ain't that right, sir?"

"Certainly it's right, Mr. Markin. We understand and we won't make any trouble for you. We appreciate what you've told us, and we'll put such few valuables as we have in your safe before dark. We're not rich people, in spite of the fact that Pilkins would like to have us rich—for his special benefit," and Clawson smiled, and patted his wife's hand.

"That's what you'd better do—put your jewelry and so on with us," said Mrs. Markin.

"And," suggested Clawson, "I think it would be wiser if we changed rooms—and Pilkins knew nothing about it, but thinks we're in the same place. Can we do that—quietly?"

"The room next to this would do just as well," said Mrs. Markin. "I'll attend to it myself, so the house-boys won't know anything about what's going on. You see, this room here, at the end of the top veranda, it's nearer to that room down on the ground floor, at the bottom of the outside stairs."

"Yes, the next room'll be safer for us under the circumstances. And we'll secure the door and the *kajangs* tonight."

"If Mrs. Clawson's nervous," suggested Mrs. Markin, "she can sleep in a room next to mine tonight, unbeknown to anybody, and you can sleep in this next room."

"That's a splendid idea," said Clawson. "We'll see about it a little later. What we want to do is not give Pilkins any idea that we've discussed this matter, and make our changes so quietly that he won't have any information on the subject, or suspect that we have any inkling of what his ideas are. If anything, I'd suggest that Mr. Markin lead Pilkins to believe that there's a good chance of going in with Pilkins on any plan he's got to rob us. In other words, if he thinks there's a chance that you'll fall in with his plans, let him think that as much as he wants. That'll put us in a position to fool him."

"That's what I told Nick," said Mrs. Markin. "And we'll go right ahead with that." She moved toward the door.

"When we've got a chance to talk privately again, we'll go over some of the details," said Clawson. "In the meantime, it's safer not to let anybody know you're in any special conferences with us, so everything will look the same as ever to Mr. Pilkins."

They nodded, and went out, after unlocking the door to the adjoining room—untying the rattans that secured the latch, that is—and returned to the bar below.

"They ain't rich, no," said Markin with a face at his wife.

"No," she breathed. "And did you notice that they didn't say a word about what happened in the *Samarkand?*"

"Wot you think, Daisy?"

"They've got the swag—and they're afraid Pillkins'll take it away from 'em, that's what. What they'll put in the safe you can put in your eye, Nick. But we're covered now—and if they lose anything, it'll be your Mr. Pilkins who's blamed for it. I've got to see about the spare bed in my room for Mrs. Clawson," and she went to her own quarters, Markin giving her an elaborate wink as she departed.

V

THE Markins and the Clawsons perfected their plans for the night, and thereby doomed Clawson to death, according to the details of the plot as secretly worked out between the Markins. It was simple enough—Markin that very night was to kill Clawson as he slept alone in the new room.

The loot would be gathered and hidden, and Pilkins blamed for the crime. He would be held for the coast guard cutter, and the plan included putting some of the Clawson loot into the boatswain's room. That should clinch the matter with Mrs. Clawson, and she and Markin and his wife would be able to give testimony which should easily convict Pilkins.

So two o'clock the following morning found Markin out on the veranda, ready to go ahead with the business. At that time the moon had just swung behind the mountains overlooking the bay. Only the stars were shining.

There was a wind that was steadily increasing, so that the tops of the palm trees were rattled violently at times by the sudden squalls, and the thatches of the roofs were fretted. There was a distant roar of surf, for a heavy swell was running outside the bay.

These noises would cover any sounds that Markin might make in moving over creaky floorings, or pressing himself through partly open *kajangs*, climbing stairs or opening doors. He had a knife of razor keenness for cutting rattans—and other little details of the night's work.

He wore only a cotton undershirt without sleeves and a pair of short canvas trousers. His feet were covered with light shoes with rubber soles, but he wore no socks. In case anything went wrong he would be able to say that he had just left his bed in order to look about and see that everything was all right and that the rising wind required his attention to the security of the house.

He moved along the veranda in the blackness, and out to the hard earthen walk along the ell of the building under the eaves until he was opposite the *kajang* near where Pilkins was sleeping on the ground floor. The boatswain had been sulkily quiet during the evening, and after talking over plans for robbing the Clawsons a couple of nights later, had drunk rather heavily and had gone to his room a trifle tipsy.

At first Markin could detect no sound of life in Pilkins' room, but as he stood there in the darkness hugging the wall of the house Markin heard the boatswain turn over with a grunt of discomfort. Presently he was snoring gently.

Markin drew away from the *kajang* and carefully stepped to the bottom of that outer stairway under the wide and overhanging thatched eaves which led to the upper veranda. When he had gained the second floor, he intended to enter the room which Clawson had abandoned—the nearest room to the head of the outer stairway.

As he put his foot on the first step he was startled by a loud creak under foot. As planned with his wife, this stairway was to be the way up. But now Markin realized that the old structure was so shaky that no matter how cautiously he ascended he was in danger of waking Pilkins. And the stairs might also wake Clawson or put him on his guard, for the whole upper veranda might give warning creaks in response to the vibration of the rickety stairway. He had not realized that stairway could be so noisy, even on a night when the wind was so strong.

Markin waited several minutes to make sure that Pilkins had not been wakened by the noise of that first step, and then moved back to the veranda. Here he entered the bar through a *kajang*, which was near the inner stairway leading directly to the abandoned room above.

Markin reasoned—and his wife had used the argument herself—that if detected by Clawson in that room there could be no guilt or suspicion attached to the fact. Markin could easily explain his presence there as his concern for the safety of his guest. The door at the head of the stairs had been oiled so that it would open easily without a sound.

Slowly and carefully climbing the stairs by keeping close to the wall, and stopping at times to listen, Markin gained the top. The flurry of wind through the palms and the rustle of vines along the veranda made a perfect cover for his movements. He opened the door to the abandoned room and listened, in order to be sure that Clawson was not moving about.

The door opened easily. Markin entered. The *kajangs* were lifted a couple of feet from the high sills, and the wind played under them, rattling the awnings. The air was grateful to Markin after the stifling heat of the stairway, which held some of the day's warmth. And conditions were ideal for him—the *kajangs* slatting in the wind and tugging at the securing rattans and thumping as the gusts struck them. He could move about easily without danger of being heard. But there was one thing about this racket that Markin disliked—Mr. Clawson might find it difficult to sleep with such a clatter about him. Yet it might be better in the end, once Markin got within reach of Clawson, for if there happened to be an outcry after the thrust of the knife in the dark, Mrs. Clawson below, and the sleeping Pilkins would not hear the cry. It was likely that Clawson might not want to sleep during the night after the warning he had received.

Markin wasted no time, but went at once to the door leading to Clawson's new room. He had secured that door with rattans, but the rattans he had used were green, so they could be easily cut. He sawed at them in the solid blackness of the room, selecting such moments as the *kajangs* tugged at their lashings and the thatch and trees were shaken by the wind. He had no reason for feeling unsafe about the work. His danger would come when he was in Clawson's room, for in case of discovery then there would be little excuse for intruding—especially through a door which had been secured to prevent night entry.

The door opened and he pushed in and closed it behind him, leaving it open an inch or so against the jamb so he could find it in the darkness if feeling along the wall for it.

All was darkness here. He had to cross the room to Clawson's bed. There was little use now in being overcautious. In case he were challenged he intended to announce his visit as necessary on account of some new thing afoot by Pilkins, give his warning, and then advance and strike before Clawson could have any suspicion of the menace.

Markin felt along the wall at the back of the room, where there were no *kajangs*. He got past some clothing hanging on hooks—a linen duster and a raincoat and odds and ends of garments hastily hung up. The position of these wall-hooks gave him his bearings, and in a few quick steps he gained the foot-posts of the bed. He ran his fingers along the mosquito-netting. There were a couple of feet between the bed and that back wall, but Markin avoided that side of the bed. He did not want the wall at his back in case there was any struggle after the first thrust of the knife.

He edged along the foot of the bed to get to the outer side, then moved toward the head, feeling along the netting with the tips of his fingers. Here he stopped to listen. For the first time since he had entered the room he felt that something was wrong. He could hear no breathing such as might be expected of a man asleep.

For a minute he was in a panic of fear. At any instant he knew that there might be a blast of fire from behind that netting, and a bullet from Clawson's revolver. Clawson was probably lying silently in bed, fully awake with the revolver in his hand, waiting to make sure of his target.

But Markin was not a man to hesitate in such a situation. He ran the point of his knife slowly down the netting at about the middle of the side of the bed, and with his other hand held aside the edge.

Markin leaned forward—and struck.

AT THE same time that he drove the knife, Markin thrust forward his left hand to cover or grasp the face of the sleeping victim. And by leaning well down he expected to be below the line of fire from Clawson's gun, in case the latter was ready to fire.

The blade went through the cane bottom of the bed.

Clawson was not there!

Markin snapped back to a standing position, and swung round. He expected an attack now from behind, for if Clawson was not in bed, he must be standing somewhere near-by, and might fire. But no gun spoke. For all Markin could tell, he was alone in the room.

He hesitated on what he should do next. It was the hard part of the job, this unexpected absence of Clawson. Sweat oozed from Markin's body now and his knees trembled with fear of the unknown. He realized that he had been defeated—if not trapped. Where was Clawson? That was the one question that surged through his brain. Find Clawson—and strike. There could be no turning back now. The knife-thrust into the caning of the bed could not be explained away if Clawson caught him in the room. The thing must be settled at once, for the whole thing was gone to pot unless Clawson was finished and out of the way.

A prickly sensation ran up and down Markin's spine and his scalp tightened and quivered under the tight navy watch cap which covered his skull. All the strain of preparation for that blow with the knife hit him now with amazing force, wilting his nerves and leaving him sick and weak. He had held his nerves taut for the crime, and by all his planning, the job should be finished—his brain kept telling him that. Yet the strain was only just begun. Here he was, blundering about in Clawson's room and Clawson was not there—or hidden and ready to shoot or strike from some unknown quarter. The intended victim had become the menace, and this complete upsetting of the whole elaborate scheme was more than Markin could bear. He bolted in the direction of the door through which he had entered.

Half-way across the room — or what seemed half-way — Markin heard a sound which halted his panicky retreat. Once more he tightened his nerves, thankful at last that he had a chance of locating his man. His fears vanished now and he set himself for battle once more. He was no coward, for he knew he had to make the best of a bad job, no matter what happened. He must either kill Clawson or face ruin. For if Clawson had been keen enough not to sleep in his new bed after going to this new room, it was possible that he was keen enough to suspect the warning against Pilkins—and those who had given that warning. It was that last thought, as much as anything, which had shattered Markin's nerve.

The sound which he had heard seemed to be a footfall near the door of the room. That would indicate that Clawson was between him and the outer door—the only way of escape, for the *kajangs* to the veranda in this new room had been carefully secured against entrance.

Markin advanced with cautious tread for the door, his knife ready. But Clawson must have heard the enemy bearing down upon him in thetdarkness, for Markin encountered nothing until he reached the wall near the door. There he ran his fingers along in search of the jamb. He found it. He did not dare to open the door yet to go out, for if Clawson was inside the room, as he must be, then Markin knew he might be attacked the instant he betrayed his position by swinging the door open. Clawson was probably there somewhere with his fingers on the door waiting for it to move and reveal the location of the intruder attempting to get out again.

Markin threw out his hands and waved them about, feeling through the blackness for his victim, the knife ready in one hand, and the other sawing through the air. But he found nothing in that black void.

Certain now that he could escape safely, Markin carefully drew the door open until it was wide enough from the jamb so that he could slip through. But he did not move until a couple of minutes after getting the door open. So far as he could judge, nothing was in contact with the door, for it swung freely on its hinges. He slipped through and into the room which he had first entered.

He felt a great relief that nothing had happened to him. He considered now the idea of giving up entirely for the night his plan for killing Clawson. But in the morning Clawson would know that the rattans of his door had been cut. and there was the gash in the cane bottom of the bed. So Markin turned back to make the door fast from that side in a temporary way, hoping that in the morning he might fix it better. And a rattan or two tied across would prevent Clawson from following, for he undoubtedly was behind in the new room. The sound which Markin had heard convinced him that the man had avoided conflict in the dark.

But as Markin turned to the door, he heard another sound—and now behind him. That meant but one thing—Clawson was not in the new room at all, but was in his original room. Instead of being alarmed at the discovery that Clawson was now in the same room with him, Markin was filled with sudden satisfaction. Now he knew without doubt where Clawson was. And he was probably in his original bed, for what Markin had heard was the creak of the bed!

Turning, Markin moved to cross the room. But now he moved furtively. It was possible that Clawson had only just awakened. Markin moving about softly amid the clatter of the wind had probably not waked Clawson until this moment. And Clawson was now likely to be sitting up in bed.

Without attempting to solve the puzzle of why Clawson had not gone to the new room, Markin moved on the bed. Only one thought had occurred to Markin—that Clawson had played a trick on his hosts. In that case Clawson did not trust the Markins any more than he did Pilkins. And according to the reasoning of Markin at the moment, if Clawson trusted nobody, he was afraid of losing his loot.

Markin gained the foot of the bed and ran his fingers along the lowered mosquito-netting. He paused just long enough to make sure somebody was in the bed—and found that Clawson was lying down, asleep, or feigning sleep, for he was breathing deeply and regularly.

Moving swiftly to the side of the bed, Markin cut the necessary slit in the netting. There was a sudden shaking of the bed. Clawson seemed to have sat up abruptly in sudden fear.

Markin struck—and his knife fleshed!

There was a gurgling cry. Just as Markin had assumed, the sleeper had just sat up. The blade entered the throat.

But there had been a grapple for Markin just before he had struck. And powerful hands grasped the shoulders of the little man just as the blow with the knife landed. And in that gurgling cry there was a quality of tone which did not belong to Clawson.

Markin knew that the man he had stabbed was Pilkins!

For a minute or more Markin was engaged in struggle with the powerful boatswain. The stricken man thrashed about on the bed, and a knife clattered to the flooring—Pilkins' knife, for Markin still held his own blade. In his efforts to free himself from the grip of Pilkins, Markin struck again and again.

But it was a death battle, for the boatswain finally fell back upon the bed, one hand clutching Markin's wrist, and the pair of them lay in the blood-sodden torn down netting.

From below there came the yells of Mrs. Markin and the screams of Mrs. Clawson. The Chinese cooks and the house-boys in their quarters behind the hotel began to gabble and call, and there was the sound of running feet over the veranda and the floor below.

Markin, panting and drenched with the bosun's blood, wrung himself free from the dead man's grasp and pawed his way out of the netting. He was still hanging to his knife, for in the back of his head was the fear that Clawson might have entered from the other room, and would shoot without warning.

AS MARKIN crouched, wiping his eyes, he was assailed by a blinding light. The heavens seemed to open. Markin braced himself for combat, his knife-hilt against his ribs, held in readiness for an outward thrust with the point. He could not understand why the moon had risen with such brilliancy—the moon had gone down—yet it must be the moon—how did it come through the *kajangs* in such brilliancy. The side of the building must have been torn away in his struggle with Pilkins—was he dying—had Pilkins stabbed him? These thoughts jangled through his confused brain.

"Good work!" came a commending voice from behind the far off point of the cone of brilliance that bathed Markin. "You got the murdering hound, Mr. Markin!"

It was Clawson's voice. He was standing just inside the door of his own room with a battery-light in his hand, which he flashed upon Markin.

Mrs. Markin, her hair down and wearing a nightgown with a shawl thrown about her and clutched around the shoulders, cried from the black pit which was the door at the head of the stairs.

"What's wrong, Nick!"

"Are you all right, dear?" came the question of Mrs. Clawson, still climbing the stairs. She gasped the words out in terror.

"I'm all right, yes," replied Clawson. "Pilkins came to kill me—and Mr. Markin finished him."

Markin pricked up his ears. Here was a new angle—and he saw his way out of a situation which he had regarded as ruinous.

"I knew Pilkins was hunting around for me—he came to my room. I was awake and I heard him getting in," explained Clawson to his wife, who now appeared behind Mrs. Markin. The landlady had brought a candle and matches with her, without stopping below to make a light. Now she applied a match to the candle, and lighted such parts of the room as were not in the range of Clawson's flashlight.

Markin's wits cleared in that instant. With his wife to back him up, he felt capable of coping with the Clawsons.

"That crimson Pilkins, Daisy!" gasped the little man. "I went to 'ave a look to make sure 'e was in 'is bunk—and I finds 'im gone. So I says to myself ' 'E's gone for to kill our Mr. Clawson and rob 'im.' Then I comes up after 'im. And wot does the swine do when 'e finds I'm after 'im in the dark? 'E 'ides in this bed 'ere, and when I comes to drag 'im out of there and send 'im about 'is business, wot does 'e do? The blighter goes to stab me! I got to protect Mr. Clawson—there's Pilkins's knife on the floor—so I 'as to give Pilkins the knife!"

Mrs. Clawson threw her arms about her husband, sobbing hysterically.

"It's all right, dear. I tell you I heard Pilkins coming to kill me, but I was awake. I heard him cut the rattans off this door. Then he came prowling into my room, but he couldn't find me in bed. I didn't want to shoot him down, and he came out here to search for me—and that was when Mr. Markin got him."

"Where the blinkin' —— was you?" demanded Markin irritably of Clawson.

"I got out of bed and hid behind my raincoat hanging on the wall. Pilkins felt of the coat as he went along, and I could have shot him."

"It's a lucky job I didn't run into you by mistake, sir," said the virtuous Markin.

"That terrible Pilkins!" wailed Mrs. Clawson. "I never did like the looks of that man. What under the sun did he want to kill you for? Where did he get the idea we had a lot of money and jewels?" She clung to her husband, and he soothed her.

"I think I know, dear," said Clawson. "I didn't want to worry or alarm you. But he thought we had the money and jewels stolen out of the *Samarkand*."

"Strike me pink, you got it, sir! That's wot Pilkins was 'intin' at! If there was a robbery in the *Samarkand*, 'e thought it was you got away with the swag. But 'e didn't say nothink to me about a robbery, not 'im!"

"You better shut up, Nick! You're lucky enough to be—alive," broke in his wife.

"Yes," said Clawson. "That's what Pilkins thought. But as I had to leave the *Samarkand*, I took no chances on being pursued by the police, so I demanded that the police examine our baggage before we left Singapore, and give us a statement that we had no stolen goods. I didn't want to be under suspicion, and I knew it would look bad if I carried out my plans and left the *Samarkand* for a three-months' stopover to travel about the islands. My wife wanted to see some of the romance of this part of the world—and I rather guess, my dear, you've seen a plenty tonight."

"Nick, don't stand there in that condition. You've saved Mr. Clawson's life right enough, but that's an end of it." She was afraid that her husband would say something which would make Clawson suspicious, and she had come near enough to ruin for one night. She turned and moved toward the stairway, where brown and yellow faces were peering in through the open door.

"All right, my dear," agreed Markin, as he turned to follow his wife.

CLAWSON held up a hand. "Stop where you are for a minute," he broke in. "There's something about all this that's not what it appears to be. You saved my life—in a way—but you also killed Boatswain Pilkins. He's no great loss to the world, I'll agree, but murder is murder, Mr. Markin."

"Wot's that you're sayin' of?" demanded the startled Markin. His wife, with a gasp, turned back from the door.

Clawson's revolver snapped up from the side pocket of his pajama jacket, and the muzzle bore upon Markin.

"I'm going to hold you for the authorities, Markin. It's not for me to say what's to be done with you, but I'm going to hold you a prisoner here until I can turn you over to the police."

Mrs. Markin's hand shook, and the candle swayed, throwing the glints of light from the revolver in Clawson's hand.

"Police! What're you talkin' about? There ain't no police in this place, and I guess if my husband kills a man in defense of himself—and to save your life—you ain't goin' to hold him for no police. We can attend to that ourselves when a coast-guard cutter comes in. Nick, you come—"

"Just a minute!" broke in Clawson sternly. Then to his wife, "Take the candlestick from Mrs. Markin, dear—and stand over this side of me." His wife obeyed.

"Wot do you mean, the police!" screamed Markin, partly in rage and partly in terror, for there was something about Clawson's new tone and manner which terrorized the little killer.

"I mean the Dutch government. I never would have come in here with Pilkins if the captain of the *Anjar* hadn't told me there was a Dutch gunboat due in here in a couple of days—which means tomorrow."

"Gunboat!" cried Mrs. Markin. "What's a gunboat to you—or us?" She knew well enough, but was attempting to fathom the connection between Clawson and the Dutch navy. Kroon's Island was Dutch territory—and murder was a serious charge, even when it happened to be self-defense.

"Not much, perhaps, from your way of looking at things," said Clawson. "But I'm an underwriter for Dutch bonds, and I have a good deal of business with the Dutch colonial government, and I've written orders to all naval commanders to give me transportation where I may ask for it. If the captain of the gunboat does not want to do anything about this case, that's his business, but until that gunboat comes I don't intend to take any more chances of having anybody running around in my room with a knife."

"It was Pilkins there who was in your room," shrilled Markin, pointing to the bed behind him. "And but for me, 'e'd ha' stabbed you good and proper, and now you want to arrest me for—"

"I'm not a fool," said Clawson. "It was you who came to my room—and ran a knife into the bottom of my bed. And maybe Pilkins came to do the same thing—but I'll take no chances with you, Mr. Markin. You stick here with me, and no nonsense."

"You ain't got no authority!" gasped Mrs. Markin, aghast that Clawson was aware of just what had happened.

"This gun's authority enough for now—and I'm a good shot. Just call that big Chinaman into the room, and let him tie your husband's hands behind his back. The navy can decide what's to be done—but there's been enough knife-play around here for one night, and I'll take care there's no more."

Mrs. Markin hesitated, but only for a couple of seconds. She knew Clawson meant what he said, and she called Quong Hing in. The Chinese bound the sniveling Markin's hands.

The next day Markin left Kroon's Island in the gunboat, and his wife went along, for the officer in command canceled the hotel concession. And the last that Clawson saw of Nicholas Markin was when he was turned over to the police at Tanjong Priok.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

YOU already know that our magazine is about to enter a new era with good paper, more pages of reading-matter, a new dress, better advertising, new features, and with strong and enthusiastic promotion back of it. And you know that, with all these and other improvements, it is going to remain the same old magazine—same writers, all the old departments, same general policy, same kind of stories, same price, the same determined effort to deserve its reputation for cleanness, reliability and honesty.

NATURALLY all these changes can't be made at once, but with the next issue, the issue of October 23, on the stands September 23, you are going to see most of the improvements begin to take shape. It takes time to build up new departments if they are to be built right, or to enlarge and develop the present ones. Advertising campaigns are not completed in a day, or even the details of a new dress. Nor have we any idea of taking one big step forward and then sitting down and feeling satisfied. We're going to go right on improving. By the time you read this there'll be a lot of suggestions from you on all kinds of ways in which we can make our magazine still better. After we've had time to absorb these we'll be on our way again.

JUST the same, September 23, two weeks from now, when the October 23 issue makes its appearance on the news-stands, is going to be our big day. That issue marks our first big step. It will have more pages than this. There will be better headings. By that time we expect to add some of the new sections to "Ask Adventure" and possibly get some of our new departments started. With that issue begins the strong promotion that is going to double our circulation, or triple it, or—but that's talking futures. Most of all, the next issue is the first issue of *Adventure,* in sixteen years, that has been printed on good paper. It is perhaps our biggest step forward.

For, as you know, our heaviest handicap has always been *Adventure's* appearance. The people who are its natural readers would not look at it because it looked like "one of those cheap popular all-fiction magazines." If the outward appearance didn't drive them off, one glance at the paper it was printed on damned it forever in their eyes. Only the independent spirits refused to judge by appearances and read the stories to form their own judgment. Most people either go by appearances or are too busy to investigate trails that do not look promising.

No matter how much we may improve the actual contents of the magazine, unless we improve its appearance, changing it almost completely, those people will not read it. And, frankly, I do not blame them.

SO WE'RE going to great pains and great expense to do just that. Good paper, trimmed edges and improved appearance inside. The outside, too, must be improved, or people will never get so far as looking at the inside. Therefore there must be a cover that does not even remotely resemble the all-fiction type. We'll keep the word "Adventure" just as it is, but the rest of the cover will be a solid, non-sensational color, with the titles of the stories and the authors' names in attractive type. We've liked our picture covers, but the cold, hard fact is that they have been one of our biggest handicaps. The ground color will change from issue to issue, but the name will always be in white.

No change in policy. Same writers. Same old magazine. Women will be barred less strenuously from our stories, but that will not alter things materially. The woman interest will never be the main interest, we'll continue to use stories with no women in them and, while our fiction will gain in appeal to women readers, there will be nothing in the magazine that will not appeal to men. No sex stuff.

ADVENTURE is coming into its own. So far as I know the field, it created a new type of magazine on three counts—fiction combined with highly developed practical services to readers; a fiction magazine devoted primarily to men readers; a magazine whose readers, writers, artists and editors work together in friendly, informal fashion. "Camp-Fire" has been the means of bringing us together as comrades. Other magazines have tried to imitate it, but does any one know of a case in which the attempt has been successful?

And I wonder whether our magazine can claim another record? Wasn't it *Adventure* that started the custom, now followed by various magazines, of having the writers appear informally on the printed page and get personally acquainted with the readers? What are the facts? Can some of you settle this question?

Yes, and while we're on the subject, isn't there still another record for us? Has any other fiction magazine gained so solid a reputation for being so reliable and authoritative in the fact material and local color and setting used in its fiction? Particularly in historical fiction?

And how about a record for cleanness and wholesomeness? Has any other magazine maintained so consistently so dependable a standard in this respect, not only as to sex but as to ethics and morals in general? For sixteen years. And I mean *any* other fiction or general magazine.

IN ANY case *Adventure* is unique among magazines. Its readers, writers and editors, working together, have made it not just a periodical but an institution. We have a right to be proud of what we've done under adverse conditions and heavy handicaps. And to rejoice now that those conditions and handicaps are to be removed. It is up to us to show what we can do when, for the first time in our magazine's history, we have a fair start in a free field.

If our new readers prove even half so loyal as you have been, we need not worry about the result.

Our welcome to these new readers. It looks as if all of us, even those more recently joined, were about to become "old-timers," an honored minority among those who gather at our Camp-Fire. But the Camp-Fire spirit is strong enough to make the newcomers into congenial comrades and, even if we do remember that it was only the "old-timers" who were not fooled away from *Adventure* by its appearance, we have a hearty hand-shake for those who were merely delayed in finding our Fire.

Here's to the new old *Adventure!* The issue of October 23, 1926, Volume LX, Number 2, on sale September 23. And here's to making that issue only the big beginning of a steady and continuous improvement!

THERE will be another magazine change that is of particular interest to us. Beginning with its December issue, *Everybody's*, published by our company, will become a sort of ally of *Adventure's*. For those of us who still voice their disappointment over our magazine's having been changed from three issues a month to two, this will be particularly welcome news. For *Everybody's* is to become very much the same kind of magazine that *Adventure* is now and, though it will have a distinct individuality of its own, you will find in it many of our authors and it will go far toward supplying you with the reading-matter you lost when *Adventure's* third monthly issue was discontinued.

Indeed, it will probably give you even more fiction than *Adventure* does now, for none of its space will be given to service departments. There will be a friendly get-together department more or less similar to our "Camp-Fire" but unique for all that. Just as the two magazines are friends and allies, so will be those who gather around their respective fires, with a welcome for all at either place.

Also, those of us who will miss the kind of cover so long identified with *Adventure* will find it again through *Everybody's*.

Its stories will have even more action than *Adventure's* and, while the new *Everybody's* will appeal to both sexes, there will be no stories in it that are spoiled for the average man by a lot of fluff and slush, no sickly, hot-house love-stories and, of course, nothing of the unclean or unwholesome.

Like our own, it is to be a reader-built magazine and its fiction will tend to assume whatever quality and character its readers may prove to desire. While I'll not be its editor I'll have enough hand in its affairs to help make old *Adventure* friends feel especially welcome and, as already stated, there will be plenty of our writers' brigade to make you thoroughly at home and assure you of the kind of fiction you like.

Everybody's will go into its new form with the December issue, which will appear on the stands November 20th. Watch for it and see whether it doesn't prove a welcome source of good reading for all who like to read *Adventure.*

SOMETHING from Georges Surdez in connection with his complete novelette in this issue:

Brooklyn, New York.

It may seem strange that *Captain de Vallier* should have forgotten his duty to wife and son for several years. But such lapses are frequently observed in the tropics. Men have refused leave of absence from the African Colonies for motives that were much less respectable than *de Vallier's* love for action.

JUST how far from his former standards and ideals a white man in Africa can stray, is illustrated by the case of the two unfortunate captains, Voulet and Chanoine, a case that attracted considerable attention a quarter of a century ago.

Voulet and Chanoine were young, brave, intelligent. Chanoine was the son of a general who had been Minister of War. Each man had a splendid record. In the normal course of events they would have risen high, as high as Gouraud, Mangin, Baratier and many others who were their comrades in the Sudan and who commanded armies in the Great War.

Voulet was given command of an important mission, and chose Chanoine to second him. At the head of four hundred and fifty black soldiers, followed by a horde of bearers, they plunged into the bush, bound for Lake Chad. The Samory wars had not been a school wherein to learn gentle methods. Reports soon came of ruthless executions, of flaming villages. Lieutenant-Colonel Klobb was sent to halt them and to take charge of the mission. Had the two captains submitted to his orders, they would not have been severely punished. But they felt that it was certain they would be sent back to France.

The lust for power, the strongest of passions, swayed them. They forgot family, honor, patriotism, discipline. And when Klobb overtook them, Voulet drew up his soldiers, and rebelled. He, the model officer, tore the stripes from his sleeves, stood ahead of the line of threatening rifles aimed at his chief, and called:

"It is I, Voulet! I'm going to smash up your mugs!"

Klobb, who had kept his standards intact, halted his men about to fire at the white man.

"One does not shoot at a French officer, even a rebel!"

An instant later, he fell, dead.

While other white officers of the Voulet Mission separated from their chief, Chanoine stuck to his friend.

Probably, after the crime and before they were slain by their own black soldiers—the negroes lose their loyalty for a white man when he fails to act as a white man—they awoke to reality, just as *de Vallier*, when he was confronted by death, recalled his wife and his son.

THE statement made by *Lieutenant Fontarge* that men write more in the tropics than in colder climes may bring long howls of protest. I grant that it may not be true of Anglo-Saxons, but it is true of Frenchmen.

Read the official reports, the correspondence between Colonial Administrators: voluminous, virulent, studded with sarcastic comments. The monographs written by officers in various branches of the Army would fill many trunks. Sad to relate, and with all respect due to work of genuine merit, narrations, reports and monographs are not always truthful. A man's imagination, which might be compared to a modest shrub in the temperate zone, flourishes under the African sun, grows to baobab-tree dimensions.

There was a young Frenchman who came down to the Ivory Coast. He was modest, diffident, and admitted that he had not opened a book since receiving his "certificate of primary studies" at thirteen. Then, for five years, he had been employed by a big Paris store to deliver packages. The balance of his years, before sailing for Africa, had been spent at the front, with little time for reading.

At the end of three months, during which time he never opened a book and seldom scanned a newspaper, he posed as an expert on art, music, history, geography—and native languages! Before long, he became a poet, and proudly exhibited the following sample:

"The water flows slowly,
On the banks of the Comoel
The monkeys climb swiftly,
On the banks of the Comoel"

He showed the same originality of thought for four hundred verses. His is an extreme case, for as a general rule the man who lives in a large center of white population is comparatively safe. It is the trader in the bush, or the officer occupying a lonely outpost, who is the predestined victim.—GEORGES SURDEZ.

BY CHANCE this letter did just that—lay in our cache two years before getting into print, as did the earlier letter that prompted its writing. If Mr. Brett's articles have by this time appeared in book form, they should be something worth having, and we are indebted to Mr. Ward, Mr. Brett, to T. D. H. and to the Auckland *Star* for our state of them.

Hikurangi, New Zealand.

It was rather a coincidence that after reading the Auckland *Star* of August 18th, in which issue the attached clipping appeared, I took up my *Adventure*, August 10, 1924 issue, turned to "Camp-Fire" and read the cutting sent you in 1922 by R. Burrows, Norwood, Canada, relating to that famous clipper *Cutty Sark*.

It is quite possible that this note may lie hibernating in your cache as long as that of Mr. Burrows did, ere it is drawn forth, but I felt the enclosed cutting would be of interest to old-timers who have followed the sea, as throwing further light on the absorbing topic of sailing ships and their wonderful speed averages on voyages of thousands of miles.

FOR a considerable time past, Mr. Henry Brett, owner of the Auckland *Star*, New Zealand, and one of the oldest journalists in the southern hemisphere, has been publishing an illustrated history of every sailing vessel which has traded to New Zealand during the past 60 years or longer. These articles appear weekly and set out the vessel's name, tonnage, captain, tabulated time records of voyages accomplished. Needless to say, they have proved wonderfully interesting to the Maorilanders whose parents or whose parents' parents braved the long ocean voyage from the old country in these staunch, white winged craft to carve out their new homes or fortunes in this far away though truly beautiful land.

Mr. Brett's historical articles on scores of sailing ships and their voyages to New Zealand will no doubt ultimately appear in book form and old-timers or others interested should communicate with him on the subject care of *Star* Office, Auckland, New Zealand, Kia Ora Koutou. (Good luck to all of you.)—A. M. WARD.

The *Lightning's* Record

Some interesting facts connected with speedy sailing ships are given by "T. D. H." in the Wellington *Dominion*, who recalls the fact that the late Joseph Conrad was master of the clipper *Otago*.

"THIS ship," he writes, "was built in 1869 by Stephen's yard to Mr. Grierson's order for the Australian trade and was a little vessel of only 348 tons register, most of the regular wool clippers being round about 1000 tons. The year 1869 saw the building of many famous ships, including the *Cutty Sark*, which is among the few that have survived to this day. It was in this year also that the Loch Line was started, in one of whose best-known ships, the *Loch Etive*.

"Mr. Conrad himself afterward served under Captain Stuart, one of the most successful captains the mercantile marine has ever seen, and under whom quite a number of senior shipmasters of today received their early training. It was said that in his forty-three years as a master Captain Stuart never lost a man or a spar, although making many fast trips including a run of 70 days from the Tail of the Bank to Melbourne.

THERE is a popular idea that the *Cutty Sark* was the fastest ship that ever sailed the seas. The *Cutty Sark* was undoubtedly fast, but her long survival has caused legends to grow, and if a comparison of best day's runs is made several ships will be found to eclipse the 363 nautical miles that is the biggest figure in the *Cutty Sark's* log.

"The biggest day's run on record seems to be that of the *Lightning*, which, on her maiden voyage to Australia, covered the extraordinary distance of 436 miles on March 1, 1854, carrying away a fore-topsail and losing a jib in doing it. The *Lightning* at this time was commanded by Captain 'Bully' Forbes, and, Miss Cecily Fox Smith, in her 'Book of Famous Ships,' tells the old story of how a passenger, whose nerves had grown ragged as a result of Captain Forbes' daring 'cracking on' policy, timidly asked him where he thought such dare-devil tactics were going to take himself, his ship and his passengers. 'To —— —or Melbourne, in sixty days,' was Forbes' reply, and the motto became a tradition in the service.

"The *Lightning's* 436 miles gives an average speed of over eighteen knots through the twenty-four hours, and it is interesting to reflect that even today in this age of steam 'Lloyd's Register' shows fewer than a hundred and fifty merchant steamers in the world capable of doing over eighteen knots. Of course, they do it more comfortably than the *Lightning* did her record run, for it is said that Captain Forbes was only able to keep the crew up to it at the point of the revolver, and felt obliged to padlock his sheets and halyards as a precaution against interference by timid members of the ship's company, while the immigrants remained battened down below as the ship raced through it.

"It was in her fourth voyage to Australia, under Captain Enright, that the *Lightning* made her remarkable record of 2188 miles in six days, a figure which yields an average speed of over 15 knots throughout. The *Lightning* was an American-built clipper, for the Americans were the originators of the long, lean clippers in the days when Britain was still building slow East Indiamen.

"ALSO in the first flight of fast ships were the *Thermopylæ* and the *Miltiades*. The *Thermopylæ's* best record run, according to the historians of the clipper days, was 330 miles, and that of the *Miltiades* 345 miles, but Captain Marshall, of the Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of India*, recorded that on one occasion in her latter days in the 'nineties, the old *Thermopylæ* kept up with him for three days coming over from Yokohama, when his own ship was making over sixteen knots.

"It is interesting to note that in the 'nineties, when sailing ships had long given up the race for speed, and were being built solely for the economical carriage of large cargoes, there were nevertheless some remarkably fast steel ships still being turned out. Mr. E. Keble Chatterton, in his 'Seamen All,' for instance, mentions the *Largiemore*, built by Messrs. Russell, of Port Glasgow, in 1892, to carry 3300 tons of cargo, and which on a voyage from Rio to Adelaide officially logged 360 miles in the twenty-four hours while running her easting down with a gale on the quarter.

"In the above comparisons it has to be remembered that the ship with the biggest day's run is not necessarily the fastest ship if her voyages are averaged out, and, indeed, sailormen will probably dispute until the end of time, as to just which was the fastest ship in the old days of white wings at sea."

The *Lancashire Witch*

The *Lancashire Witch* was one of the many vessels built at Quebec. She was a full-rigged ship of 1574 tons, and was eleven years off the stocks when she commenced trading to New Zealand. She was owned by Firnie & Co., of Liverpool, and in 1863 was chartered by the Shaw-Savill Co.

The *Lancashire Witch* made her first passage to Lyttelton in 1863, and the 420 immigrants who embarked at London experienced a very trying and anxious time. Shortly after her departure scarlet fever broke out, and before reaching Lyttelton three adults and 23 children died and were buried at sea. Captain West, who was in command, called at the Cape for fresh provisions. Owing to the disease on board neither saloon nor steerage passengers were permitted to land. Notwithstanding the diversion to Capetown the ship made the passage to Timaru in 93 days, where some of the passengers were landed. She then proceeded to Lyttelton, and on arrival was immediately placed in quarantine.

When the ship was admitted to pratique the passengers again suffered, as no proper arrangements had been made by the authorities for their reception. A small party was landed at Camp Bay, and found the place deserted and no provisions provided, consequently the remainder of the immigrants refused to go ashore. The fifteen men who landed found their way to Rhodes Bay, and later reached Lyttelton in a famished condition. The delay in landing the passengers naturally caused great dissatisfaction. There were no less than nine births during the voyage.

ON THE next voyage to Lyttelton, in 1867,the *Lancashire Witch* brought out 31 saloon, 12 second saloon, and 100 steerage passengers. She sailed from London on April 9, and owing to a series of heavy gales was detained in the Channel for sixteen days, clearing the land on April 23. When the passage was well advanced the ship encountered another terrific gale. This was on July 23. Heavy seas broke on board and carried away a large portion of the bulwarks, flooded the deck, and caused other damage. The first and second officers were thrown down and had a narrow escape of being drowned.

The *Lancashire Witch* arrived at Auckland on June 2, 1865, from London, with the largest number of passengers that had ever arrived at Auckland in one vessel, viz., 490. She left Start Point on February 13, and crossed the equator on March 6, 22 days out, in longitude 28.30 west. The meridian of Greenwich was reached on April 24, 64 days out, thus taking 42 days to run from the equator to that point. The reason of this long passage was that no southern trades were met with, and after reaching latitude 20 degrees she had a series of southeast gales. The easting was run down between 45 and 46 degrees.

Tasmania was sighted on May 21, and the North Cape on June 1. A volunteer brigade was organized during the voyage, and the members were regularly drilled by Sergeant-Major Roberts. Dr. Wills, father of the famous Australian explorer, came out as surgeon of the ship, and the passengers presented him with a testimonial in acknowledgment of his services. Twelve children died during the voyage, and there were five births. All the passengers were selected and sent out by Captain Daldy, of Auckland.

The records of the *Lancashire Witch* were:

To Auckland—Sailed Feb. 10; Arrived June 2, '65; Captain King; Days 112. To Lyttelton—*Sailed July 5; Arrived Oct. 13, '63; Captain West;

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*Via Cape of Good Hope and Timaru.

Days 96. Sailed Apr. 9; Arrived July 29, '67; Captain King; Days 110; Land to land 89.

The *Gananoque*

The *Gananoque* was a smart American ship of 785 tons. She was chartered by the Shaw-Savill Co. for two voyages to New Zealand, and sailed from London three years after she was launched at Quebec for Lyttelton. This was in 1860. Leaving London on February 14, with 215 passengers, she covered the distance from the Downs to the equator in 21 days. She was becalmed a few days in the tropics, and carried fairly strong winds in the Southern Ocean, arriving at Lyttelton on May 9, completing the passage in 85 days.

UPON her return to London she loaded up for Auckland, and sailed from the Downs on July 9. She crossed the equator on August 12. She carried fairly good northeast trades, and then met with 15 days' detention; thence moderate southeast trades prevailed, and the meridian of the Cape was passed on September 6. A fortnight later the ship encountered a very severe gale from northwest to southwest; she was scudding throughout four days of its continuance, a wild and angry sea running. The poop rails on the port side, the fore boat and long boat were both stove in, the stern cabin windows and skylight smashed, the after cabins completely flooded, and the fowl coops and almost everything movable washed overboard.

Then followed favorable weather to the southwest cape of Tasmania, which was passed on October 16. Light contrary winds prevailed for several days until the North Cape was made on the 15th, and Tiri Tiri on the 17th, the ship coming up the harbor early the following morning. She brought a considerable number of passengers of a superior class, among them being Mr. David Nathan and family, who were returning to their land of adoption.

On September 15, the third officer, Mr. Lovell Jones, was knocked overboard by the main topmast studding-sail sheet. A lifebuoy was thrown to him, and the lifeboat lowered, but all in vain; the poor fellow was drowned. One of the passengers, James Houston, a young man of 27 years of age, apparently in good health, dropped down suddenly on deck and died instantaneously.

The *William Davie*

The *William Davie*, a speedy craft of 841 tons, was built in 1866 by Stevens at Glasgow for the Albion Shipping Co. She ran, with one exception, exclusively to Dunedin, and up till 1875 brought out an average of 150 passengers each voyage. On her maiden run out in 1866 she sailed from Glasgow on August 5 with 200 passengers, crossed the equator on the twenty-ninth day out, the Cape on September 29, and the Snares on October 28, reaching Port Chalmers on November 1, completing the passage in 88 days. The following year she cleared the Channel seven days after her departure from Greenock, and was off the Snares in 78 days.

IN 1870 the *William Davie* made the smartest passage of any ship that season, 77 days land to land, or 83 port to port. Four years later, in 1874, she ran from Gravesend to the Bluff in 88 days, or 76 days from her final departure. The *William Davie* was most consistent in the regularity of her outward passages. In 1876 she crossed the equator in 19 days from Greenock, and completed another good run of 77 days, land to land. In 1880 her rig was changed from a ship to a barque. On her last voyage, in 1881, she had a bad run to the equator of 48 days owing to light winds and severe storms. The vessel is also credited with some smart passages home. I have no record of these.

The *William Davie* completed fourteen voyages to New Zealand, as under:—

To Dunedin—Sailed Aug, 5; Arrived Nov. 1, '66; Captain Logan; Days 88. Sailed Aug. 2; Arrived Oct. 29, '67; Captain Logan; Days 88; Land to land 78. Sailed Aug. 6; Arrived Oct. 30, '68; Captain Logan; Days 85; Land to land 83. Sailed June 2; Arrived Sept. 9, '69; Captain Ross; Days 99. Sailed June 16; Arrived Sept. 6, '70; Captain Hendry; Days 82. Sailed May 25; Arrived Aug. 21, '71; Captain Hendry; Days 88. Sailed Apr. 6; Arrived July 8, '72; Captain Peacocke; Days 93. Sailed Jan. 30; Arrived May 1, '73; Captain Peacocke; Days 91. Sailed *Jan. 14; Arrived Apr. 23, '74; Captain Rankin; Days 99; Land to land 76. Sailed Jan. 10; Arrived Apr. 20, '75; Captain McAlister; Days 100. Sailed May 6; Arrived July 27, '76; Captain McAlister; Days 82; Land to land 77. Sailed Jan. 24; Arrived May 12, '80; Captain McAlister; Days 108. Sailed Dec. 9; Arrived Mar. 22, '81; Captain Woods; Days 103.

To Bluff—Sailed Jan. 14; Arrived Apr. 12, '74; Captain Rankin; Days 88.

The *England*

The *England*, a ship of 853 tons, was chartered by the Shaw-Savill Co. for six voyages to the Dominion. Her first appearance was in 1865, when she brought out to Dunedin 85 passengers and a general cargo. She sailed from London on June 9, and cleared the Channel four days later. She made a good run to Otago Heads, when she was blown off the coast for eight days. The passage occupied 95 days, land to land. The following voyage she ran out in 81 days, land to land.

THE voyage of the *England* to Wellington in 1871-72 appears to have been made under great difficulties. For some reason the doctor in charge was off duty for nearly two-thirds of the passage. At one time, stated Captain Harrington, the best half of the ship's company was laid up with sickness in the Southern Seas, amidst gales and icebergs. All the passengers who could be spared from attending the sick were placed in watches, and even then the captain could with the greatest difficulty muster five or six in a watch, such was the strain upon them in attending their families in sickness.

On arrival at Wellington, in the absence of the doctor, Captain Harrington reported 16 deaths during the voyage, including three adults. The vessel was immediately placed in quarantine and the passengers landed at Somes Island, with Dr. Buller in charge. Three days later Dr. Buller reported there were several cases of sickness among the passengers, and two distinct cases of smallpox, the patients being adults. The passengers en masse made complaints of negligence and ill-treatment against the ship's doctor, and later a commission of inquiry was held by Dr. Hector, Mr. Reid, and Mr. Halcome, but as the proceedings were held with closed doors the result of the inquiry was not disclosed.

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*Via Bluff.

The outward passages recorded by the *England* were:—

To Auckland—Sailed Oct. 20, '66; Arrived Feb. 9, '67; Captain Fox; Days 112.

To Wellington—Sailed Dec. 3, '70; Arrived Mar. 19, '71; Captain Harrington; Days 106. Sailed Dec. 8, '71; Arrived Mar. 9, '72; Captain Harrington; Days 92.

To Dunedin—Sailed June 9; Arrived Sept. 25, '65; Captain Houston; Days 108. Sailed Dec. 19, '67; Arrived Mar. 16, '68; Captain Fox; Days 87. Sailed June 19, '69; Arrived Sept. 30, '69; Captain Fox; Days 103.

* * *

MAYBE circus driving doesn't count in this argument, but on the surface of things I don't see why it shouldn't. This letter from our Camp-Fire cache dates back to 1924:

Chicago.

Some time ago I read a controversy on six- and eight-horse drivers (snatchers), also jerk-line drivers. Inclosed clipping from *The Billboard* of February 14th might be interesting to the aforementioned argufiers. Wondered at the time why they never went to a circus lot when mud is six inches deep with plenty of rain.—E. O. SONNANSTINE.

The clipping follows:

Jim Muldoon, of Eastport, Me., who was with the Adam Forepaugh Show from 1880 to 1886, lately mailed Charles Bernard a photograph of a silk program issued for the Montgomery Queen Menagerie and Circus at San Francisco, Calif., April 20, 1875. Muldoon says that he saw J. H. Paul drive a 40-horse hitch with Murray's Great Railroad Circus seasons of 1870 and 1871, and that Paul told him the reins weighed 85 pounds. Paul was very powerful and weighed 250 pounds. He was from Rockport, Maine.

* * *

HERE is something more as to the performance of the *Wyoming* in the Straits of Shimonoseki.

Wyoming.

About 1893, I think, I read an article in either *Scribner's* or the *Century* about the doings of the *Wyoming* in the Straits of Shimonoseki. The article has been referred to in Camp-Fire but I have seen no answer as yet, so send my recollections of the story.

DURING the Civil War, among other vessels, the *Kearsarge* and the *Wyoming*, sister ships, were sent hunting the *Alabama*.

The United States had tried to cultivate the friendship of the Japanese and among other presents had given them some cannon, Dalghrens or Rodmans, I believe. One of the Japanese princes got hold of these cannon and fortified the Straits of Shimonoseki and armed a steamer, closing the straits.

They fired on some vessels, including an American steamer. This was after dark. The Yankee slipped his cable and kept on to Shanghai, and the Japs thought they had sunk her. This report reached Yokohama, where the *Wyoming* happened to be lying under orders for 'Frisco. The *Wyoming* was sent to investigate.

Early one morning the *Wyoming*, having come up through the Bungo channel and the Inland Sea, appeared at the back door of the straits. The Prince's steam yacht was lying at the wharf, the armed steamer was anchored in the straits and every gun was trained on the entrance, so, in the morning mists, the *Wyoming* caught them napping. She put a shell (11-inch Dalghren) through the boilers of the yacht, which went on into the town and exploded among the houses. She silenced the forts and sunk the steamer and, about forty minutes later, was on her way to 'Frisco.

Some six months later, I believe, an allied fleet took the Straits and found them still pretty well wrecked.

The Japs promptly reclassified foreigners as Outside Barbarians and Yankee Devils.

I think this is the incident to which reference was made. If so an inquiry to the War College, Washington, D. C. (Address the Librarian), will probably get you further information. I understand that the article is on file there, or the magazine is.—HOMER B. HARLAN.

* * *

AT THIS Camp-Fire it happens that many of our letters are drawn from a part of our cache inhabited mostly by communications of several years back. The following one, of 1924, is from a comrade at that time an Immigration Inspector at a Pacific port and is one of the cases in which there is sound reason for the writer's name not being printed.

First, the letter from an earlier Camp-Fire to which F. G. H. refers:

I am an enthusiastic supporter of our merchant marine (when it is an honest-to-God American one and not a Chinese merchant marine with the American flag trailing astern). And it seems to me that in all the controversy about the "treatment" given the American seafaring man under the La Follette Act nothing is being brought out about the extra-hazardous nature of the employment—it is at least as hazardous as railroading—and further, and more important, nothing about loyalty to the Government whose flag flies over the ships. A fine merchant marine we shall have to turn over to the Government in time of emergency if it is loaded down with everything but Americans! I am glad to see that the Shipping Board is doing something to straighten this matter out by insisting on preference being given to Americans on its ships clearing from the West Coast.—JAMES V. MURRAY.

The letter itself follows. Are conditions now any different?

I am an Immigration Inspector at this port and it is part of my duty to muster the crews of the various vessels arriving here.

Apropos of the attached clipping, it may interest you to know that the *S. S. President Pierce* arrived here this morning with the following crew:

Europeans 103; Japanese 2; Filipinos 6; Chinese 126—Total 237.

This is about the average crew of the Pacific Mail (Shipping Board) vessels running between the Orient and San Francisco. [So Mr. Murray is correct.]

Official Government records will show about the same proportion of Chinese on the other American vessels of the Pacific Mail Line.

While I am prepared to back any statement I may make, yet, for obvious reasons I would prefer no use of my name in this matter, unless you consider it necessary.—F. G. H.

* * *

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom A. A. Caffrey rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

I—notice the first person—have always marveled at the ultra-modesty of Camp-Fire's contributors. Most of these writers lean backward when it comes to a matter of self. Can't understand it! No air-service man could. For, better than cameras, we air followers love ye olde first person. Just turn us loose, and the I's begin to fly.

My dad always claimed that I floated down the Merrimac river during the spring freshet of 1891; that, in a bottle, I was washed up at Lawrence, Mass. But in 1898 or 9, this same dad gave me a burned stick that was supposed to be part of the charred mast of the battleship *Maine*. Along toward maturity, I learned that that stick was taken from our own wood-box and charred in our own kitchen stove. So, I'm beginning to question this other thing about floating down the Merrimac. I'm wise!

During the war period, I said "yes sir" for three full years in Air Service. First, I was a first-class buck; then a rotten Sgt. 1st cl., and lost all my friends. Seventeen months of that time I spent in France with the world's best air squadron, the Tenth. As a flyer I was never good, for the good die young—and I didn't. But flying belongs to those on the approach side of twenty, and I was too old, too old—and I knew it; and was satisfied just to flutter a little. I fluttered, fell and fluttered.

After the war, I worked on air-mail. The general super said, "Fire Caffrey." They did. Then I worked for the Army as a civilian. I—getting back to first person—was just about three years ahead of Bill Mitchell. I protested against the Army Air Service advertising European-made planes to the extent of allowing Lieuts. McCready and Kelly to make the first American non-stop coast-to-coast flight in a foreign plane, a Fokker. They made the flight. Army Air Service said, "Fire Caffrey, and keep him fired." They did.—A. A. Caffrey.

* * *

SOMEHOW what did and didn't happen to this comrade's Camp-Fire button seems natural rather than strange. For one thing it isn't particularly well established that a white collar is a mark of honesty, or that the absence of one is a mark of the opposite. For another thing, while there are plenty of honest white collars at Camp-Fire and among those this button met safety, there's a pretty good understanding between our magazine and the soft-collar or no-collar folks in general and a Camp-Fire button, I'd say, is more likely to draw from them a friendly hand than a stealing one.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Two years ago, after lingering back in the shadows for some time, I came in a little closer and got a Camp-Fire button which I have worn constantly since. During that time it has traveled considerable. It has also met many and various people.

I HAVE tossed it aside with my coat while mucking in the mines of Cœur d'Alene and worn it selling real estate in Columbus. Left it lie in bunkhouses of cattle outfits out of Ft. Hall and near the Boca Grande in old Mexico. Was with me standing wheel watch to Colon and watched me shovel wheat in Dakota. Rode the rods with me on the Overland Limited out of Chi and came back in a drawing-room. Sold motor cars in Los. and unloaded bananas in N'Awlins. Helped me win second and third money in two small dirt track races and was on my coat which served as a blanket while I slept in a box car, which contained twenty-two "boes," on a freight out of Memphis. And never, not once, was it molested until two nights ago while I was a guest at a highly respectable club here. I removed my coat to bowl a few frames. When I donned it again I found that some one had appropriated my button. Can you beat it?

I am enclosing two-bits for another one. Guess I'll padlock this one if I have occasion to remove my coat among respectable folks again.

Well, I'll say "Adios." Wishing the gang around the Fire the best of luck, I am—Bert Taylor.

* * *

INDEXES by volume for most of the volumes of *Adventure* back to about 1912 are on hand and will be sent free to any reader who will pay the necessary postage. Allow about one-half cent per index for postage and be sure to specify the volumes for which you wish the indexes when you write. And remember that the supply of some of the indexes is very low and may be exhausted by the time your letter is received.

* * *

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: Full list in second issue of every other month.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**

2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**

3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**

4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**

5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 330-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport, (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

8. ★ South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania
Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
(Editor to be appointed.)

11. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. Armit, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

12. Philippine Islands.
Buck Connor, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

13. Hawaiian Islands and China
(Editor to be appointed.)

14. Japan
(Editor to be appointed.)

15. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.* Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
Gordon MacCreagh, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

17. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
Captain C. L. Oliver, care *Adventure.* Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

18. ★ Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
George W. Twomey, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

19. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

20. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
Charles Beadle, La Roseraie, Cap d'Ail (Alpes Maritimes), France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

21. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
Captain F. J. Franklin, Gulfport and Coast Enquiry Depot, Turnbull Bldg., Gulfport, Miss. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

22. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

23. Africa Part 5 Morocco
George E. Holt, care *Adventure.* Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

24. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.* Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

25. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. Moffat, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

27. Turkey
J. F. Edwards, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

29. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.)

30. Albania
Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
Lieut. William Jenna, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

32. Scandinavia
Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Finland, Lapland and Russia.
Aleko E. Lilius, care *Adventure.* History, customs, travel, shooting, fishing, big game, camping, climate, sports, export and import, industries, geography, general information. In the case of Russia, political topics, outside of historical facts, will not be discussed.

34. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
(Editor to be appointed.)

35. ✠ Great Britain
Thomas Bowen Partington, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
Edgar Young, care *Adventure.* Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

37. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
Paul Vanorden Shaw, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N. Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

38. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
William R. Barbour, care *Adventure.* Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

39. Central America
Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

40. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of Old Mexico – Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

41. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. Mahaffey, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
W. Russell Sheets, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md., Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche. Inhabitants, history and customs; archeology, topography, travel and explorations; business conditions, exploitation of lumber, hemp, chewing gum and oil.

43. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. Sangster ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. Robinson, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

46. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
C. Plowden, Plowden Bay, Howe sound, B. C. Climate, prospects, hunting, fishing and yachting.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec
Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. ★ Canada Part 8 Newfoundland
C. T. James, Bonaventure Avenue, St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

51. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.
Fred L. Bowden, 54 Mason Avenue, Binghamton, New York. Lumbering, hunting, fishing and trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading.

52. Canada Part 9 The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic
Patrick Lee, Tudor Hall, Elmhurst, Long Island. General questions on this territory, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffin Land, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere. Also Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

53. Alaska
Theodore S. Solomons, 5647 Lexington Ave., Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

54. Baffinland and Greenland
Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

55. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

56. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

57. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
Frank Earnest, Sugar Loaf, Colo. Agriculture, stock-raising, mining, game, fur-hunting, fishing, camping, outdoor life in general.

58. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.
Fred W. Egleston, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

59. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

60. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. Whiteaker, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
Joseph Mills Hanson, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber.

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section 65.*)

65. Middle Western U. S, Part 5 Great Lakes
H. C. Gardner, 3302 Daisy Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.
Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
(Editor to be appointed.)

68. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
(Editor to be appointed.)

69. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
William R. Barbour, care of *Adventure*. Alleghanies. Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim, Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
Hapsburg Liebe, care of *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot River. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

72. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine
H. B. Stanwood, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.
Howard R. Voight, 108 Hobart St., New Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history.

74. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland
Lawrence Edmund Allen, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, care of *Adventure*.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

(Editor to be appointed.)

J.—Navy Matters

Lieut. Francis Greene, U. S. N. R., 241 Eleventh Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. C. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

Dr. G. K. Noble, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

Dr. Frank E. Lutz, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write Kennard McClees, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico**, and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, are 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, Francis H. Bent, Jr., care of *Adventure*.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Africa

A THESE questions cover the Dark Continent pretty thoroughly, but the inquirer was courteous enough to make the task of answering them as easy as possible for Mr. Beadle simply by classifying and numbering them in a common-sense manner.

Request:—"Please send me the following information on Africa:

1. Would a "green-horn" have any chance in the diamond and the gold fields as a trader, hunter, merchant?

2. Has most all of Africa been explored and what are the general conditions of the country at present? Are many of the inhabitants still savage? Please give me some information on the government of the tribes.

3. What kind of game is found (small or large)? What equipment would you recommend for an exploring trip into the jungles, arms, etc.?

4. What is the chief mode of travel? Do traders still employ men as packers of parties?

5. Please tell me something about the witchcraft and the witch doctors or medicine men? Do you think that this has kept the people savage longer than it was necessary? Is head hunting practised to your knowledge in Africa?

6. What are the living conditions in Africa at present? Is the fever as bad as formerly? What other diseases are present? Do the natives still have the plague?

7. What kind of fruits are found in Africa? What disposal is made of it? Does England own most of the land and is any of it farmed? Does the English race predominate with whites?

8. Please give me any other information you can about this subject and would appreciate snap-shot photos of anything asked about above. Will try to return the favor.

9. What kind of arms are used by the natives? Could they be purchased; at what price; and from whom?"—Raymond Underwood, Sykesville, Md., U. S. A.

Reply, by Mr. Beadle:—In response to your numbered questions (for which thanks!)

1. Very little. You have to get experience of the country, the ways, the lingo—Dutch and Kaffir—and remark that jobs are difficult to get there. If you have capital—a few thousand dollars—that's another horse.

2. Yes. Most explored more or less now. General condition of Transvaal and South generally prosperous in minerals, cattle and farming. Rhodesia more or less the same. Central going ahead rapidly except for Uganda which isn't a white man's country—too unhealthy, but still moves. Yes, far great majority of natives are savages as we understand it, particularly in Central, but all ruled by white governments. Government of tribes is sometimes what is euphoniously called a Protectorate, *i.e.*, run by the chiefs under white tutelage and armed advice; others are directly subjects of the white parliaments as in Transvaal, Cape, Rhodesia, etc.

3. Game, small and large: buck of all sorts from the size of a rabbit to larger—as large as a bison or an elk; lions, leopards, elephants (getting rarer), hippopotami, etc. All equipments buy on spot; cheaper and specially adapted; arms, a light rifle and for big game a heavy rifle, say .455.

4. Motor. In remote districts horse and ox wagon or mule. No, all packing parties done by wagon or native porters.

5. Am not in camp at this moment but when I get back I'll send an article on witchcraft (too complicated to reply in a letter). Possibly, but this to my mind is a very debatable point. However, that's a personal opinion; in the opinion of the white man: Oh, yes. Officially, no. But isolated cases occur in remoter districts but for purposes of cannibalism.

6. Just as ordinary life in towns, autos, hotels, etc.; in bush from a bunaglow to a tent, living on canned goods or game. No fever. Much less, that is to say, in districts which have been cleaned up but otherwise just the same. Sleeping sickness, beri-beri, elephantiasis, spirillum, blackwater, smallpox, enteric or typhoid and a few other minor ones! Haven't heard of any cases of the plague lately.

7. Enormous forests of native woods. Excellent material. It is difficult to give any tree that is preponderant in English. Used for local building and large shipments to Europe; as yet only scratched. England owns about three-fifths, France two-fifths and the rest Belgians, Portuguese, Italian and Abyssinia.

8. Can't launch into a general treatise, but I'll send you list of books to read which also contain photos.

9. Guns mostly now—old-time spears and bows and arrows; most tribes are officially disarmed.

10. The primitive arms are frequently for sale. Traders specialize in them. Prices vary from a dollar and fifty cents to ten dollars or so.

Mexico

WHERE ranches are run both on modern American lines and by primitive conditions similar to those of a century ago—and where good jobs are scarce.

Request:—"I am writing you to obtain the following information which I have tried in vain to acquire for some time.

Would like to know about cattle companies which are operating in Mexico, and which are running cattle under conditions and methods the same as those employed in the U. S. range sections in former years.

Would like to locate in a good range section, work for a large company on the range, learn the language, people and country, and in future years work into an outfit of my own.

Pardner and I have worked on ranges from Pecos to Montana so are no pilgrims looking for Mecca, but old conditions restored to thirty years ago. We understand Mexico is the place."—HARRY SHAY, Strool, S. Dak., Box 45.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—Most of the American owned ranches in Mexico are run along the methods that are used in this country now. Most of the northern part of Mexico that is being used for cattle raising is along these lines. You would have to go down into the Central States or into the remote sections of the Northern States, where the ranches are conducted by Mexicans or Indians, to find the primitive conditions that you are looking for. Mexico in some parts is a hundred years behind our country. Most of the riders on the cattle ranges in Mexico are Mexicans. There are a few Americans but they are scattering and far apart. The pay for a cow hand usually runs in the neighborhood of from $15 to $20 per month.

If you are going to run an outfit of your own I would suggest going down into Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon and looking that part of the country over. Grass is good the whole year in these two States and near to the United States packing houses. The other border States are good for stock raising also but you would have to be so far from market in order to find good range. In many places along the Rio Grande in Coahuila and Chihuahua the whole country is desert-like and, cacti and such vegetation is all that you can find for miles and miles.

I would suggest that if you have a good job to stay with it, for you could not better yourself by going into Mexico, if cattle running is what you expect to do. There are too many idle men in that country for a job to last long vacant. An applicant would have to be on the spot to have any luck at all in getting a job. A letter application would not be considered at all. It would cost you quite a bit of jack to go over into Mexico—a head tax; a passport; vaccination fee; by auto the registration on the Mexican side; and would have to have about $100 over your fare to your destination.

Times have changed in Mexico in the past few years—not so many years ago you could go all over Mexico without having to pay as much as you will now to get into the country. If you expect to do any hunting you will have to get a hunting license which will cost you $15 per year. Hunting and trapping is good in many sections of northern Mexico, principally in the more remote sections in the mountainous regions. The States of Sonora and Chihuahua are among the richest mineral regions in the world. Very few minerals that are of any commercial value that are not found in these States. All of the northern States of Mexico are highly mineralized.

Rattlesnakes

SOME comparisons between them and the much-feared tarantula in which neither comes off with a great deal of credit.

Request:—"I hope you will enlighten me concerning the deadliness of the sting of our local specimen of tarantula, compared to the bite of the common black diamond rattlesnake.

1. Is the sting of the tarantula as deadly as the bite of the rattlesnake under favorable conditions to each?
2. What distance and how high can a tarantula jump?
3. How far can a rattlesnake, four feet long, strike?
4. Can a rattlesnake strike without coiling?
5. If poison glands are emptied and fangs extracted, how long does it take glands to refill, if at all, and how long does it take new fangs to replace extracted ones in the rattlesnake?"—JACK W. ORTH, Sonora, Calif.

Reply, by Dr. Noble:—Your letter awaited me on my return from Europe early in December. I was over there *studying frogs* for four months, but I'm afraid that won't help me a great deal in answering your tarantula questions. I do know, however:

1. That there has never been an authentic case of death occurring directly from the bite of a tarantula, which we all know and dread so much. There are certain spiders which are poisonous but I'll have to leave those details to *Adventure's* expert on Entomology.
2. That a tarantula can jump about a foot high.
3. That a rattlesnake can strike from one-third to one-half its own length.
4. That the coil at best is loose and irregular and is not necessary for striking.
5. That rattlesnake poison glands when empty (which probably never occurs, completely) are refilled in one or two days. Extracted fangs are replaced in about two months.

Colombia

WHERE there are said to be dwarfs. Here is some information on how to get there, with an account of an experience which demonstrates the great usefulness of a seaman's passport.

Request:—"Kindly give information in regards to climate and inhabitants on the peninsula in the northeast corner of Colombia next to Venezuela, S. A.

Do we require a regular U. S. passport or will our seamen's passport do? We intend to go south to take pictures.

What are the laws in regards to firearms?

Also the name of the peninsula and where we can get a map showing the trails that are chartered."—R. C. BANTA, Balboa, C. Z.

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—1. The climate of the Peninsula of Goajira, which is the most northern portion of Colombia, is similar to that of the West Indies and corresponding to Panama in certain respects but with less rainfall.

2. Your seamen's passports will do. No country is as strict now as they were just after the European war. I doubt if you will require even a seaman's passport at the present time but it is just as well to have one in case you are questioned, as one time will pay for all the trouble of keeping it with you. I had to use one once. Got held up in a yellow fever quarantine in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, and couldn't get back to my ship. The old passport did some good work then.

3. You can take in anything up to and including .38 caliber. Don't try to take anything larger or it will be held up at the port of entry.

4. A few years ago the Colombian government had some good maps of the country made. You might get on to how to obtain one through the Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C. The London *Times* map is fair and also the German map, Stieler's; which you might get to see in your public library.

There is a trail running along the west side of the peninsula from where it comes out of Venezuela near the base of the Golfo de Venezuela along through Cojoro, Yurija, and on up to Macune, which is a sailing and canoe port on the extreme end. This trail forks at Cojoro and twice between there and Macune and these trails lead over to the eastern side and strike a similar coastal trail beginning at Riohacha and passing through Carazal and back of Cape Vela, Honda Bay and Chimare Point and bending to the right into Macune.

There is also another trail running almost up through the center of the peninsula. The peninsula is roughly a hundred miles long and fifty miles wide. There are some *zambos* (mixed negro and Indian) in the ports, mulattoes, *cholos* (white and Indian mixed) and pure Indians of the Carib breed.

A few years ago I saw an article in some magazine (*Travel, Pan-American Bulletin, National Geographic,* or some such) giving an account and photos of an expedition that went into the interior of Goajira. As well as I remember it they went in from Riohacha, hit the trail and then went up into the hills on foot. The photos showed people resembling the San Blas of the Panama coast which they claimed were dwarfs. I imagine they are about the same as the San Blas Indians one sees in canoes coming into Colon. I have never been inland from the coast villages.

Muskrats

RHODE ISLAND makes a good home for this most useful animal, both because of climate and of the absence of natural enemies—unless there may be some weasels present.

Request:—"I am considering seriously a muskrat farm.

I intend to lease a complete farm of fifteen to twenty acres, buildings and all, with a pond of six or seven acres. In order that the rest of the land will not lay idle, I will give the land and house to a farmer who will act as caretaker and at the same time raise feed for me and do other odd jobs that I can not do alone. I have five thousand dollars or more to invest in this project.

1. Do you think the northern and wilder parts of Rhode Island suitable for a 'rat farm?

2. What are the natural enemies of muskrats?

3. What food do they eat that must be purchased or raised to be fed to them?

4. Are the American fur markets in a position to absorb in bulk, large quantities of farmed 'rats, without spoiling the market?

5. Can 'rats be purchased for stocking and *where?* Will they stand shipping?

6. Can you suggest anything that can be raised along with 'rats as a subsidiary, *i.e.* ducks, chickens, pigeons, skunks, coon, mink, etc.?

7. Is there any market for the carcasses?

In regards to Rhode Island being suitable, I think it is, not because of the severe winters, but the long ones. Anyhow I would like your opinion."—CHARLES S. LAWTON, Newport, R. I.

Reply, by Mr. Bowden—"Your proposition the way you have it lined up looks good to me. If your pond is a natural old one, with a profusion of grass and flags, it certainly looks good. The 'rats do a lot better in an old natural pond than in an artificial one. Be sure and fence your pond, about a couple of rods back from the water's edge. The best fencing I have found for this purpose is the Cyclone fence made by the U. S. Steel Company, easily procurable from most any local dealer. One-inch mesh is the size for muskrats. Set the bottom of the wire about eight or ten inches into the ground to discourage digging under the wire. Fence should be about four feet above the ground, with an apron on the inside of the fence to prevent the 'rats climbing over the fence. But by all means fence your 'rat farm or your stock will all leave you after the first young ones are born.

1. I surely do. Good pelts should be raised in that part of New England. Of course because of your somewhat earlier spring, your pelts would probably prime a little earlier than in the more northern regions.

2. Outside of weasels, of which you have probably none in Rhode Island, which sometimes attack the young 'rats, I know of no natural enemies of the muskrats which would need to concern you in Rhode Island. Of course there is always the danger of cholera through improper feeding, also the danger from mange and kindred troubles of the fur farmer.

3. If your pond is an old one with lots of grasses and flags in and about it the muskrats will provide most of their own food, and be better for doing so. If you wish to supplement their efforts you can do so with any kind of fresh vegetables, apples, etc., but be sure that whatever you feed them is strictly fresh, thereby avoiding some of the dangers of cholera.

4. Yes. For the past ten years the demand for muskrat pelts has far exceeded the supply, and it looks at present as if this condition would continue.

5. The fur papers all carry ads. from people who are in a position to furnish muskrats for breeding purposes. Yes, they ship them all over, in a specially constructed shipping crate.

6. I would not advise raising anything on the same ground as the muskrats. My idea is that if you go into the fur-raising game you will find it a lot better to "put all your eggs in one basket" and then watch the basket.

7. There is nothing so far as I know that can be done with the carcasses; have often thought it is a shame that the fur-bearers can not grow but one pelt, some way it always seemed like an awful waste to me to have to completely destroy the animal for the sake of securing the pelt. Foolish, but that is the way it always struck me and I'm not Scotch either—much.

As I said in the first paragraph in my humble opinion I believe that Rhode Island would be O. K. for any kind of fur farming, of the smaller fur bearers; of course bear and some of the larger animals would be out of the question, but muskrats, yes.

If you wish me to supplement the above information with any that I may have, call on. Good luck if you start, and remember that common sense is needed more than anything else in fur raising.

Lower California

A FULL of deceitful Indians and weary jackasses, and a land where it is a long time between drinks. There is a better place in which to look for gold, and Mr. Mahaffey tells where it is.

Request:—"We are contemplating a trip into Bajo, Lower California about the middle of May and would like a little information.

The Colantura River Country has been recommended to us as being an unexplored Eldorado, and as you are an A. A. man covering this territory, I would like your opinion as to the feasibility of this trip.

We have what is commonly known as a "heap" and if it is possible to cover part of the road with it, we will be able to keep down the overhead. How far will we be able to get by machine, *via* Tia Juana?

Are pack animals obtainable after one gets into the interior and what is the average price?

I have been informed that there is some place in Baja, Lower California, where the streams are very rich in placer gold, but that the Indians are very hostile. Can you enlighten me as to the truth of this?

We had thought of driving to Ensenada, then going by boat to St. Quentin unless we should hear of some good territory between these places. You see, we expect to be gone on this trip from one to two years, so if you know of any likely districts between Ensenada and St. Quentin or for that matter any place in Lower California, we would certainly appreciate any "dope" that you could give us. We both speak Español, so don't expect any difficulty from that source.

Do you know where we can procure an accurate map of this district at a moderate price?"—H. D. MITCHELL, San Francisco, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Mahoffey:—As far as I know there are no "Eldorados" in Lower California. I have been in, over and around quite a bit of the country, and frankly you can look farther and see less than any place I know of. As far as the rich gold country with all kinds of hostile Indians, you must have the Yaqui Indian country in Sonora mixed up with Lower California. It is a fact that the Yaquis are hostile, but whether there is anything in their country worth a look at is hard to say. Probably not.

If you collected all the real honest to gosh Indians in Lower California in one place you would not have enough to make a mess. Outside of a few Cocopahs along the Colorado River, who go to Yuma and pass off as Yumas, when they get wrinkles in their little tummies, and a few Santa Catarinas and Cahuilas, there are mighty few Indians, and you could run most of them twenty miles with a cap pistol.

I would advise you to go down to 510 Customshouse and get their book called "Mexican West Coast and Lower California," which will tell you all about Lower California. Go to the S. F. Public Library and look over the XVI Volume of the Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences, called "Lower California and Its Natural Resources." This book has a long list of references in the back and you can look up a lot of dope on the country. You must remember that Lower California is a dry desert sort of place where it is a long time between drinks.

In the 80's a great deal of prospecting was done, the whole country was combed over, they did find a few placers but they are all worked out. It would be one chance in ten million of you ever finding anything. You must also remember that according to recent laws which are now in effect that you can not buy land, or file on a mineral claim in Lower California, as 95 per cent. comes under the "Ley de Extranjeria" and it would do you no good to find a mine as you could not get a title. The Department of Commerce can tell you what the recent land laws are.

Now, Mr. Mitchell, a great many men have prospected and chased jackasses all over Lower California for the last forty years and as far as I know they never found anything worth taking home. Maps are scarce and not good. The National Academy book has a fair large scale map. A good map of the southern part is printed by the American Geographical Society, New York, called the Baja California Sheet David Goldbaum, Ensenada, Lower California, has a blue-print map, but this is about the same as the first one I mentioned.

If you must roam around, I suggest you go down to Honduras, where at least you can take up a mine if you find it.

I would suggest that if you go to the Public Library that you get the book called "Adventures and Explorations in Honduras" by Wells, and read it through. I refer to the Olancho country in Honduras. Bancroft tells us that in 1528 the Spaniards took an astounding quantity of gold out of there, using straightened horseshoes for tools, about 12,000 ounces in a few months.

I own a ranch in Olancho, not far from Juticalpa, the capital of the department, they tell me there are seventeen quartz veins on it, all showing good value.

There IS gold in Olancho, if you can find it. Whether there is any worth while in Lower California or not is questionable and the big catch is that no foreigner can file a claim, so why hunt mines for other people.

Furthermore the best and only time to go to Lower California is in winter, during the little rain they do get, as being a dry country the one big difficulty is WATER. However if you find anything ten chances to one some Mex will run you off, as legally you have no business placering down there. Mexico for the Mexicans says they and I say let them have their durn country.

Lumbering

A WORK done by hardy, clean, reliable men who are our modern pioneers. Any one who has ever eaten a good lumber camp cook's food will know one reason why the work attracts a discriminating type of citizen.

Request:—"I am asked to give a paper before a Literary Club on the subject Lumbering in Ontario's Wilds. I thought perhaps you could send me some material on the subject."—Mrs. H. L. Harris, Newberry, Mich.

Reply, by Mr. Moore:—You have given me a big task for—a letter. But I shall give you a little information which I hope will help you out. Lumbering in Ontario—except for the far north—up North Bay, Mattawa and Sudbury way, is no longer done on a very large scale. As a country grows the timber goes. As a result most of our lumber companies are either running on a small scale south of the French River or on a large scale north of that, and particularly up the big rivers in Quebec.

The lumber company buys a berth of timber-land from the government. Before doing so they probably have had men "run" the limits to get an estimate of the timber on it. We know such men as "bush-rangers"—no, you won't find it in the dictionary—you probably call them "timber-cruisers." The lumber company having purchased the limits, then sends men in to build camps—principally of logs—sleep camp, cook house, stables, etc.

This is done early in the fall. Then the provisions and men go in. The number of men and the quantity or amount of supplies will all depend on the size of the company. Of course teams and hay and grain go in at the same time. Also all manner of sleighs, chains, peaveys, axes, etc.

The camp is now under way except for the roads. The main road leads to the water. In all probability a river, it might be a lake with a river running out of it, or it might be a siding where the logs may be loaded on flat cars. Trees are felled all over the area, roads are cut to them and these logs are gathered together and skidded—that is they are rolled up one on top of the other on some logs and left so that teams can drive alongside and the logs rolled on to the sleighs to be drawn out to the main road and eventually to the "dump" as the place where all the logs are finally placed. So there is a continuous hum of industry going on all the time as men fell trees, men cut roads, men with horses skid the logs, other men with horses draw them away.

Each camp is in charge of a foreman; there is a clerk to keep the time and look after the books. In small camps one man does the cooking. He is helped by the chore-boy, who peels potatoes and cuts wood and carries water and washes dishes, and hundreds of other things. The cooks as well are real cooks and can turn out some things that would make an ordinary man's teeth water. For mind you these men are well fed. They have the very best of everything. Times of meals vary in camps. Breakfast might begin at four. Lunch at ten. Dinner at four, and supper at dark.

Over in the sleep camp the men are comfortably looked after in bunks one above the other or in some cases on those small folding cots. Everything is clean and tidy. The men go to bed early for they have to be up early. Horses have to be fed and harnessed before breakfast. As a rule these men are hardy, clean, reliable and temperate in all things. It is only when they go out to the big places that they slip a little, for they are not saints but human beings like the rest of us.

They work hard, are healthy, kind and generous to a degree. The worst of them appear in fiction and to tell you the truth the most of what you read about them is nothing but fiction. The brutality and utter lack of gallantry of these men is not true. The most of them are married men, or if not, the sons of good families and well brought up. They are our pioneers; they might come from the farms they work all summer, or they might follow the work in the camps with work on the drive in the spring—that is when the logs are floated down the rivers to the mills. I have a very high opinion of the men in the shanties—I worked with them, I have lived with them all my life, so I should know.

And that's about all that I can tell you. My experience has been gained in the smaller camps. The larger camps are only the smaller camps on a bigger scale. There is very little trouble among these men; they are very loyal to the people who pay them.

Rifle Stocks

A METHOD of oiling that requires many applications and much rubbing, but produces a finish which gets better with time, and which resists rain and dampness perfectly.

Request:—"I would like to know how to oil-finish a rifle stock."—Fred W. Bott, Chicago, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. W. Wiggins:—I advise the following method of oiling stocks, and use it altogether on my own rifles and guns.

First, remove, with commercial preparations which you can secure from any paint store, the old finish; rub down the surface of the wood with steel wool, and remove all dents as far as possible. Sometimes it may be even necessary to insert, and glue or pin, small pieces of wood to match missing or mutilated parts.

Then the grain should be raised as follows: Wet the stock well all over with warm water, dry and rub down the resultant roughness with the fine steel wool or sandpaper. Repeat this process until the grain does raise when wetted and dried. I have done this on one stock as many as twelve times.

Then, just rub boiled linseed oil, tinted with burnt umber or not, as depends on your preference for a dark or natural color on the wood. Use about a teaspoonful at a time, once a day or even every other day, and rub well into the wood with the palm of the hand, or a flannel rag.

I usually put on six coats of this; it gives a finish that gets far richer with time, and resists rain and dampness perfectly. Some use the raw oil, and the nicest job I ever saw was an old Krag rifle refinished with cocoanut oil, hand-rubbed by a native of the Philippine Islands.

Red Lake

AGAIN the number of inquiries received about this present-day gold rush suggests that we should print one of Mr. Victor Shaw's thorough-going letters of advice on how to prospect in that region.

Request:—"I should like to equip myself for the Red Lake gold rush and would be greatly obliged if you would give me some information on the following questions:

Mining; mining law; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology?"—Chas. Pokora, Milwaukee, Wis.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—A Canadian mining claim (lode) contains 51 acres, being 1,500 feet square. You locate with three posts, four feet high above ground and four inches square. One post placed on discovery of mineral, the other two placed one at each end of the center line of one thousand five hundred feet along the vein or as near on vein as possible. Write on each post name of claim, also name of locator, and date. On No. 1 post you write in addition: "Initial Post—direction of Post No. 2 (giving compass bearing) so many feet of this claim lie on right and — feet on the left of the line from No. 1 to No. 2 posts." You must mark line between posts distinctly by blazing trees or cutting brush, or by line of rocks, 2 feet at base and 2 feet high.

Mineral claims must be recorded at office of mining recorder for district in which claim lies within 15 days from date of location; one day extra being granted for each ten miles from office after first 10 miles.

To prospect and locate claims you must have a free miner's certificate, costing five dollars each year. One hundred dollars' worth of assessment work must be done on each claim each year, as annual labor to hold claim. Five hundred dollars of such work entitles you to a Crown grant, or patent, which gives you title to claim and all surface rights for five dollars an acre.

Write to Department of Mines, Ottawa, or to Hon. Wm. Sloan, Victoria, B. C., for summary of Mining Law of Canada.

Get the book called "The Miner's Guide," by H. J. West, postpaid, which gives minerals, tests for same, camp outfits and mining outfits, practical geology, hints on selling, etc.

For *work* in Red Lake district, at Patricia, in northwestern Ontario, you'll need a portable forge, steel drills and striking hammers, dynamite, fuse, and caps, tamping stick, miner's spoon, gold pan, magnifying glass, coal, or charcoal, wheel-barrow, picks and shovels, beside your outfit of tent, stove, dishes and grub.

FOR plain prospecting, the glass, gold pan, a prospector's pick, and perhaps a 4-lb. hammer, with a miner's pick and a D-handle No. 2 round-point shovel is all the tools necessary, also a quart-size iron mortar and pestle. If you work your claim, you've got to know how to sharpen and temper steel drills; how to drill with them to excavate the rock in tunnel or shaft; and thus work in on your vein and open it up for getting out the ore. If the claim is rich enough (say fifty dollars a ton average) it will pay its own way while being developed. You then drive along your vein and up-raise say fifty feet at fifty feet intervals, thus blocking out ore which can be shot down and wheeled outside for shipping. If the ground is soft and heavy, you'll need to watch it carefully and put in timbers to hold it, so you'll have to have a cross-cut saw and file for sharpening. You can frame any mine timbers with saw and ax.

The country rock of the Red Lake region is the Keewatin schist and sericite. The ores are found in quartz veins, or stringers at times, in this schist. They may contain pyrite, galena or sphalerite (zinc). The gold is free and finely scattered throughout the vein, which is often a network of white quartz stringers. The ground is all staked for ten miles and two miles wide along the scene of the strike. Prospectors are getting outside into Rainy Lake, Rickaby Lake, Lightening River, and other sections.

Use the gold pan along streams, or lake shores, to find float gold, which may have been washed downhill from a vein above somewhere. If you get gold in the pan, sometimes only seen with glass, follow it up-hill panning until you come to the vein. Sounds easy, but must be learned, like anything else. Watch cliff faces for veins—also scars on hills made by landslides. In flat timbered country watch ground for vein croppings. Best course is naturally along streams and lakes, where you should also watch for quartz fragments, having mineral; or vein croppings containing it. Follow quartz float same as panned float—up, either up-stream, or up-hill on a bank.

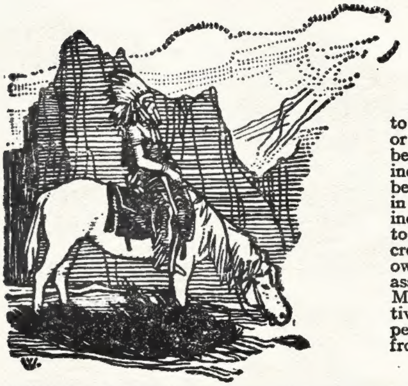
If you find a vein on a hillside, blast out enough of it to make sure it is more than a mere pocket on surface; then go down beneath on the hill and start a tunnel in size 5 x 7 feet in clear, to hit the vein at least one hundred feet deep vertically below croppings. If vein when encountered shows ore as good or better, drop down-hill and start in a tunnel to cut the vein at a good depth, say one thousand feet. If you are in a flat country, you may have to sink a shaft directly on the vein. Make it 4 x 6 feet in clear; timber the collar and for a few feet down so as to avoid rocks dropping, also to provide base for a windlass. You then rig your windlass and have a rope and big bucket to lower and haul up the ore broken at bottom as you sink. You can sink twenty feet and throw out with shovel, which gives good depth to avoid shooting out your surface timbers. If you get water in shaft, rig a hand-pump. With a tunnel, a ditch carries off all water.

THAT'S about all you need to start. If you hit any rich mineral, you'll only need let it be known and you'll have no trouble selling. Buyers will hunt you.

You might write to the Arizona Bureau of Mines, Tucson, Arizona, for free booket on "field tests for common minerals." They are at all times ready to answer questions, also.

If you go into Red Lake (300 miles round trip from Hudson, on the C. N. R. R.) in winter, you'll have to use dogs, and they are bought up as far west as Winnipeg. Canoes are used on the many waterways in the summer, and you pole and paddle yourself and your outfit. There is a road being built from Hudson which is now about to Pine Ridge Hudson Bay post. It will go on via Pakwash Lake to Red Lake. There is a recording office to have been established at the lake by March 1st, and there is one at Hudson, or Sioux Lookout, on the C. N. R. R. Also, a triangulation station is to be, or already has been, planted at the lake, to which claims are to be tied, until a survey can be run on to the nearest base line, some fifty miles away.

Should you have any further question on special matters, don't hesitate to come again. I've given you the geology of that region. General geology is too big a subject to detail as a whole.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, ***give your own name if possible.*** All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

MANN, G. B. Engineer and contractor, last heard of from Tampico, Mexico, in 1925. Anyone knowing of his whereabouts please communicate with me.—Address EDWARD MANN, 224 West Market Street, York, Pennsylvania.

HENDERSON, ALPHA LLOYD. Baker by trade, dark hair and eyes. Anyone knowing whereabouts please write me.—BERT, care of *Adventure.*

MAC DONALD, BILL. Druggist from Alabama. Last seen in Park Avenue Hotel, 33rd Street and Fourth Avenue, New York.—Write G. B., care of *Adventure.*

SHARP, JOHN REUBEN. P. I., S. C., 1919-1923, worked in Frank's Cafê, Kansas City, Mo., 1919. Has brother or brother-in-law in or near K. C. who was photographer. — Address NEWTON TUSHOPH, 2325 Parkwood Avenue, Richmond, Virginia.

O'ROKE, JOHN. And any of the Old Vieux Carrê of 1921 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Your old friend would like to hear from any of you.—Address MIGUEL (MIKE) BARRERA, JR., 6a Colima 193, Mexico City, Mexico.

TAYLOR, EDWARD. Last heard of in Myrtle Point, Oregon. Is 5 ft. 9 in. tall, blue eyes and dark hair turning gray. Served in the war, has scar on left forearm near elbow. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please write to me.—Address JOHN HINDERLIE, Box 770, North Bend, Oregon.

O'FARREL, W. W. One time chief wireless operator on *U. S. R. C. Manning*. Last heard from he was on way to Brazil. His sister would like to learn of his whereabouts.—Address MRS. DOROTHEA PAULL, P. O. Box 277, Venice, California.

JOHN. Please write us through Will or this magazine. Going back to Texas in July. Ma & Wilbur.—Address, care of *Adventure*.

KORTE, W. F. Last heard from Denver, Colorado, three or four years ago. His brother.—Address G. F. KORTE, 1570 3rd St., San Diego, California.

LOCKE, ARTHUR. Formerly of Vancouver. B. C. Last heard of two or three years ago at Richmond Hill, Long Island, New York. Please communicate with me. —Address CHALMERS MURRAY, Harrington, M. Ontario, Canada.

PARKER, LENNIEL ERNEST. Would greatly appreciate any information as to the present whereabouts and also his wife. Was cook in Cozy Kitchen in Boise, Idaho, in 1916, went to Utah and started a delicatessen. Any information received will be greatly appreciated by the boy they helped.—Address P. G. STEVENS, 346 Tillamook Street, Portland, Oregon.

HOLSALL, HARRY. Would like to know the whereabouts of my brother. Last heard of at the State Public School. Coldwater, Michigan.—Address RHOMA HOLSALL, 23 West 130th Street, New York City.

NICOLL, JOHN L. of Albany, New York. Last heard from San Antonio, Texas, on December 19, 1909. Any information will be appreciated by his brother, B. H. NICOLL, 563 Fifth Avenue, Long Island City, New York.

WARD, RICHARD (DICK). Last heard of at Moase P. O., Wyoming, formerly of Grovant, Wyoming. Expect to be in the Park this summer and would like to get in touch with you.—Address J. A. COULTER, Dawson, North Dakota.

COONSTACK, PERCY JAMES. Last heard of as being about to leave a farm at Saskatchewan en route to Nova Scotia. Mother seriously ill. Communicate with A. DANIEL, care of Mrs. E. Andrew, West Wyalong, New South Wales, Australia.

THE following have been inquired for in either the August 8th or September 8th, 1926, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

DONOVAN, THOMAS; Knight, Mrs. Anna; Tabel, Carl Geo. Otto; Bachman, Chas. and Emil; Carrier, Roy L.; Bacchus, John Paul; "Ed Merrick"; Armstrong, "Scott" H. (Tiny); Patterson, W. L.; Holl, Gerald Francis; Hale, Edna; Conlogue, Bernard C.; Cooper, Mervin P.; J. C. L. and the Mrs.; Joe; Koff, "Shorty"; Bannon, Chas.; Loan, Mary; "Hodshire," James Victor or Jimmie; Justice, Rayborn E.; Shatswell, John; relatives of John Edwards; Daniel, Corsley; Kellogg, Ernest D.; Kellogg, Clement; Smith, Dr. W. H. (dentist); Kirk, William N.; Lister, John or family; Pray, W. H.; Reed, Mrs. Jack E. (nee McFarland); Briston, Robert J.; Pragan, James T.; Thompson, J. C.; Pallaye, Andrew J.; Hoffman, Max; Scott, O. O.; Richie, Clarence and Harold; Thompson, Ross; Members of the 4th D. H. Q., C. F. C., B. E. F., France; Eissengarthen, Guido.

UNCLAIMED MAIL.

AVIS FERNE, Lawrence Adams.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

OCTOBER 23RD ISSUE

The next issue of *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE WAY OF SINNERS Part I *F. R. Buckley*
A modern novel in a medieval setting.

A STAG AT EVE A Complete Novelette
Entertainment for generals—and others. *Leonard H. Nason*

ULYSSES *L. Paul*
The call of the rails.

THE MARK THAT TELLS *Harvey Fergusson*
The ranger found the bullet.

TREASURE Part I *Gordon Young*
There was a rumor among the Islands.

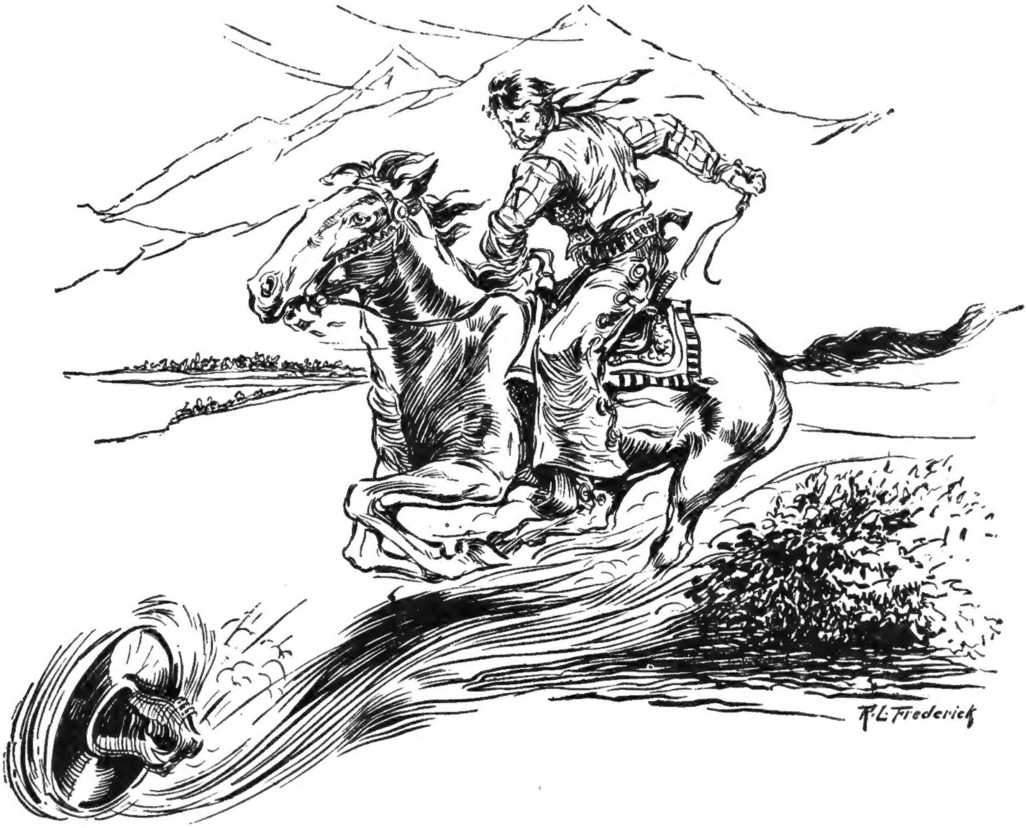
DÉODAT DOLOMIEU The Goodly Company of Adventurers
Soldier and geologist. *Post Sargent*

THE OGRE A Complete Novelette *Arthur O. Friel*
Upper Orinoco justice.

CLIPT WINGS *Andrew A. Caffrey*
The air-mail pilot got fired.

THE FALLING STAR A Complete Novel *Talbot Mundy*
A book-length story about ancient Rome and Antioch.

The Stetson Hat in Literature



INDIGO PETE'S J. B.

I was leavin' The Blue Dog on the run;
When pop goes a deputy sheriff's gun,
And he must a been talking to me at that,
For off goes my ole gray Stetson hat;
She hit on her edge and she rolled along,
For the wind was a-blowin' loud and strong.
So I took after old J. B.,
The same as the sheriff took after me. . .

—*Henry H. Knibbs*

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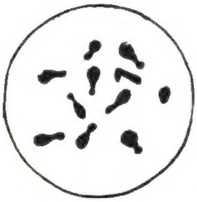
DANDRUFF?



Bottle Bacilli, the cause of Dandruff. Illustration reproduced from Hazen's "Diseases of the Skin." C. V. Mosby, Publisher.

Dandruff is a disease difficult to cure, but easy to check.

Unless checked and properly treated it has a persistent tendency to reappear, and often in more virulent form, with possible loss of hair or even total baldness.

The treatment to check dandruff requires constant cleanliness and the use of a suitable antiseptic solution to combat the disease and to heal the scalp.

Listerine does the trick

Dandruff is not only an unsightly nuisance but it is a danger signal of more serious scalp trouble—loss of hair, sometimes actual baldness.

It is a germ disease that no intelligent person will neglect.

The ideal treatment to combat dandruff is the systematic use of Listerine, the safe antiseptic.

The use of Listerine for dandruff is not complicated. You simply douse it on your scalp, full strength, and massage thoroughly. The effect is antiseptic, cleansing and healing. And you will be amazed to see how this treatment, followed systematically, does the trick.

Moreover, Listerine will not discolor the hair nor will it stain fabrics.

Try Listerine some evening when your scalp feels tired and itchy. Dandruff is probably causing the trouble. You will be delighted with the results. — *Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, U. S. A.*

LISTERINE

—and dandruff simply do not get along together